THE PEDI POLITY UNDER SEKWATI AND SEKHUKHUNE, 1828-1880

Peter Nicholas St. Martin Delius

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

August 1980

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

ABSTRACT

'THE PEDI POLITY UNDER SEKWATI AND SEKHUKHUNE, 1828-1880'

Peter Nicholas St. Martin Delius. University of London. 1980

This thesis explores aspects of the history of the Pedi polity from 1828-1880 covering the period from the emergence of the polity in the aftermath of the difaqane until its defeat in November of 1879. It sets out to fill the lacunae in the existing literature caused by the failure to adopt a critical approach to historical sources or to provide a dynamic account of Pedi society. An analysis is provided of the changing nature and distribution of power within the polity. The economic changes and political processes at work within the society and the impact of Christianity on it are explored. The development of the polity is also examined in the context of the processes of conflict and change taking place beyond its borders. The concluding chapters of the thesis draw on the insights afforded by the examination of these themes to attempt a substantive revision of the existing explanations and accounts of the conflicts in the 1870s which culminated in the defeat of the polity and the subjection of the Pedi to colonial rule.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements and thanks are due to Anthony Delius who nurtured my interest in Africa, and who has put up with me for all these years; to Richard Gray who shepherded me through my undergraduate years and to Shula Marks who captured and shaped my interest in southern African history, and who bravely shouldered the burden of supervising this thesis - a task which she has performed with insight, meticulous care and almost infinite patience. Stan Trapido rescued this thesis (and its author) from a Brixton betting-shop and has contributed materially and intellectually to its completion. William Beinart far exceeded the dictates of reciprocity in his role as sounding board for and critic of the arguments presented in the thesis.

I incurred a large number of debts of gratitude during my travels and researches. Ms. Ute Poershke, Bettina Gols and Gabriele May gave me invaluable assistance in the Berlin Missionary Society archives in 1975. Phil and Chris Bonner's hospitality enabled me to escape from the 'Eureka Hotel' in Pretoria and they showed me great kindness in trying times in 1976 and 1977. The Reverend and Mrs. R. Schiele, Tebogo Masikela and Godfrey and Isaac Sekhukhune gave me sustained assistance during my field work in Sekhukhuneland. Maureen Tayal edited, mapped and morale-boosted, helping to make the last stages of writing this thesis, incredibly, an almost pleasant experience.

The bulk of the research for this study was done in the years 1974-1977 during which I held a School of Oriental and African Studies Governing Body Postgraduate Exhibition, S.O.A.S., in conjunction with the University of London Central Research Fund also funded my research trips to Berlin and South Africa. My present employers - Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford - have generously allowed me time to complete the thesis.

LIST OF MAPS

ABBREVIATIONS

B.M.A. Berlin Missionary Society Archive

B.M.B. Berlin Missions-berichte

B.M.S. Berlin Missionary Society

C.A. Cape Archives

N.A. Natal Archives

T.A. Transvaal Archives

U.A. University of South Africa Archives

Z.A.R. Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores aspects of the history of the Pedi polity from 1828 to 1880, covering the period from the emergence of the polity in the aftermath of the difaqane until its defeat in the closing months of 1879 by a combined British and Swazi force.

The term Pedi presents a number of problems. It has been variously used to indicate virtually all the Sotho-speaking peoples of the northern and eastern Transvaal, restricted to the Maroteng chiefdom and groups which seceded from it, and used to refer to the population living within the area of hegemony of the Maroteng paramountcy.[1] It is in this latter sense that it is employed in this thesis. Even this usage is, of necessity, a loose one. The Pedi polity was a geographically fluid entity and the period under consideration witnessed marked changes in the area and peoples which fell under its sway. The subject population was not ethnically homogeneous. By the late eighteenth century a multiplicity of groups of diverse origins lived within the Pedi domain. This diversity was compounded in the nineteenth century by the movement of groups of refugees into the area of the polity from throughout the Transvaal and beyond. Hence while a common culture was in the process of emerging, differences of language, self-identification and culture remained. The history of the polity is a clear illustration of the fact that political and cultural boundaries were far from coterminus in nineteenth century African society in southern Africa.

---

[1] H.O. Mönnig, The Pedi (Pretoria, 1967), v-vi; I follow the example of Andrew Roberts' study of the Bemba in using the term polity in preference to state or kingdom. The proper definition of state remains a 'thorny subject' and the problem posed by the distinction between kingship and chieftainship is also unsolved. See A. Roberts, A History of the Bemba, (London, 1973), xxiii-xxxiv.

There is, in comparison to other African communities in the Transvaal, a considerable body of secondary literature on Pedi history and society. The historical literature falls into two main categories. The first is principally based on extensive archival research in the records of the Z.A.R. and the British administration in the Transvaal (1877-1881); to a lesser extent it draws on published Berlin Missionary Society sources. These accounts focus on the relationship between the Pedi polity and successive Transvaal administrations. They explore the conflicts which culminated in, and the course of, the military campaigns conducted against the Pedi in 1876-1877 and 1878-1879. The history of missionary activity in the eastern Transvaal, however, also forms an important - if subsidiary - theme.[1]

There are a number of weaknesses common to this literature. It is marred by an uncritical use of sources in relation to Pedi society. This has particularly serious consequences in a context in which almost all documentary material was generated externally to that society. The assumptions and interests of commentators on the polity are rarely examined, and these accounts draw mainly on the explanations for events proffered by missionaries, officials and settlers without scrutinizing their basis in the evidence. This, despite the fact the evidence offered in support of these explanations is often ambiguous or contradictory.

---

[1] The most important of these accounts are J.C. Otto, 'Die Sekoekoeni Oorlog Tydens die Regering van President Burgers', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of South Africa, 1941; J.C. Otto, 'Oorsake en Gebeurtenisse wat Indirek in Regstreeks Aanleiding Gegee het tot die Veldtog Teen Sekoekoene', Historiese Studies, 7, 4 (1946); T.S. Van Rooyen, 'Die Verhoudinge Tussen die Boere, Engelse en Naturelle in die Geskiedenis van die Oos-Transvaal tot 1882', Archives Year Book, XIV 1(1951); T.S. Van Rooyen, 'Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky in die Geskiedenis van die Suid Afrikanse Republiek, 1859-1882', Archives Year Book, XVII, 2(1954); K.W. Smith, 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi of Sekhukhune, 1877-1879', Archives Year Book, XXX, 2 (1967); K.W. Smith, 'The Fall of the Bapedi of the North-Eastern Transvaal', Journal of African History, 10, 2(1969); D.W. Van Der Merwe 'Johannes Dinkwanyane, 1842-1876', South African Historical Journal, 8(1976).

A major and related flaw that characterises these writings is the absence of any systematic attempt to explore the nature of economic and political processes, struggles and transformations within the polity, and to examine the extent to which these moulded the initiatives and responses of its rulers and subjects and shaped its historical role and experience. The failure to explore these dimensions leads to a reliance on crude and mono-causal explanations. The most common of these is to analyse the development of the polity, and in particular its 'expansion' in the 1870s, in terms of the personal ambition of the paramount. Subsidiary forms of explanation invoke overpopulation and the grip of cultural imperatives to account for the role of the paramount and some subordinate chiefs. Not only does this literature fail to explore the internal dynamics of the polity, but it also neglects to rigorously situate its development within the context of the changing regional and sub-regional political economy, and the shifting balance of power and relationships of conflict and alliance which existed between the various political systems which impinged on the eastern Transvaal.

The second category of historical literature consists of accounts which focus directly on Pedi history and particularly on that of the Maroteng paramountcy. These authors draw primarily on their own and earlier collections or oral tradition, but supplement these with largely published and secondary historical sources.[1] The history described is almost exclusively that of the rulers rather than the ruled and mainly consists of a narrative of events. However, insofar as they attempt to account for, rather than to simply recount, events, these accounts share a tendency to mistake the language of argument for the substance of conflict

---

[1] The principal examples of this category are D.R. Hunt, 'An Account of the Bapedi', Bantu Studies, V, 4(1931), and Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 1-42.

and to assume that political norms determine the instance and outcome of struggles for power. The assumptions and consequences of this approach are revealed in the comment that

> No wonder then that here the only political knowledge worth having is that relating to kinship. Once a man's father, mother, mother's father, wife's family and his brothers, sisters and brothers-in-law are known, it is a matter of certainty to predict his political colour and future reactions.[1]

In this view kinship is the determining social system and the individual is transfixed at the centre of a kinship network. The results of this approach are also revealed in the extent to which complex genealogical arguments are rehearsed to account for conflicts between royal agnates.

To point to these flaws in the existing literature is not, of course, to suggest that it is without value or has not benefited this thesis. The first category is the product of often exhaustive archival research which assisted the archival explorations undertaken in the course of this study, and the second includes valuable collections of oral traditions. Both, if critically used, yield important material and provide suggestive insights.

The historical accounts fail to present a dynamic picture of Pedi society or its context; this failure is even more marked in the case of the bulk of the ethnographic literature. Although a handbook of Pedi 'laws and customs' was produced in the early years of this century, - principally for the guidance of magistrates - and subsequently revised and reprinted, and a series of ethnographic articles were published in the 1920s and 1930s, no major study of the society was undertaken until the

---

[1] N.J. Van Warmelo, A Genealogy of the House of Sekhukhune (Pretoria, 1944), p.45.

late 1950s and early 1960s.[1] The most comprehensive of the latter studies and that based on the most recent fieldwork, is that of Mönnig. It also provides a stark example of the weaknesses of much of the literature. He sets out to describe 'traditional' and 'typical' Pedi society and excludes the study of social change. The result is an idealised, systematized and normative picture of Pedi culture stripped from the context of time and place and from the structure of relationships through which the Pedi are administered and through which they participate in the economy of South Africa. Mönnig fails either to appreciate that 'a continuity of symbolic form need not automatically entail a continuity of symbolic function', or to provide an analysis of the 'dynamic involvement of symbols and customs in the changing relationship of power between individuals and groups' which might have provided vital pointers to an historian.[2] The difficulties with his account are compounded by the fact that it is composed from sources which span a century and fundamental transformations within the society and of its context. The information which it contains is therefore used with considerable caution and only when supported by historical evidence, and this caution is extended to the other anthropological accounts.

---

[1] C.L. Harries, Notes on Sepedi Laws and Customs (Pretoria, 1909); C.L. Harries, The Laws and Customs of the Bapedi and Cognate Tribes of the Transvaal (Johannesburg, 1929); W. Eiselen, 'Die Eintlike Reendiens van die Bapedi', South African Journal of Science, XXV (1928); W. Eiselen, 'Preferential Marriage', Africa, 1,4; W. Eiselen, 'The Sacred Fire of the Bapedi of the Transvaal', South African Journal of Science, XXVI (1929); W. Eiselen, 'Über die Hauptlingswurde bei den Bapedi', Africa, V, 3 (1932). See also the bibliography for additional publications by Eiselen. The principal studies based on fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s are C.V. Bothma, Ntshabeleng Social Structure - A Study of a Northern Transvaal Sotho Tribe (Pretoria, 1957); C.V. Bothma, 'The Political STructure of the Pedi of Sekhukhuneland', African Studies, 35, 3-4 (1976); B. Sansom, 'Leadership and Authority in a Pedi Chiefdom', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 1970; Mönnig, The Pedi.

[2] A. Cohen, Two Dimensional Man (London, 1974), p. 29.

A marked exception to this characterization of the anthropological accounts is provided by the work of Sansom. He has provided an illuminating analysis of political leaders and of political process which is rooted in the economic and political context of the society in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He has also attempted a comparative discussion of 'traditional' economic and political systems which while marred by the acceptance of a dual economy model, by ecological determinism and by the absence of discussion of historical context or process, provided important insights into the nature of the Pedi polity.[1]

This thesis sets out to fill some of the lacunae identified in the existing literature. In particular it examines the changing nature and distribution of power within the polity, and explores the economic changes and political processes at work in the society and the impact of Christianity on it. It also seeks to show that the development of the polity needs to be examined in the context of the processes of conflict and change at work beyond its borders. The concluding chapters of the thesis draw on the perspective provided by the examination of these themes to attempt a substantive revision of existing explanations and accounts of the conflicts in the 1870s which led to the defeat of the polity and the subjection of the Pedi to colonial rule.[2]

This topic and the approach adopted to it rather than emerging directly out of the literature on Pedi history and society was formulated in the context of a wider body of theoretical and comparative literature. The thesis draws heavily on the perspectives provided by the efflorescence of studies of nineteenth century southern African history over the last

---

[1] Sansom, 'Leadership' and his chapters 'Traditional Economic Systems' and 'Traditional Rulers and their Realms' in W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.) The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa (London, 1974).

[2] Most of the following chapters contain a brief discussion of the literature which deals with the theme and/or events with which they are concerned.

decade; particularly those on the emergence and transformation of African polities. However, while this debt is obvious in both footnote and text, two other bodies of literature, although not extensively cited, also played a key role in shaping the perspective of this thesis.

The topic for reasearch was initially formulated in the light of approaches developed in mainly British political anthropology. In the 1960s, the functionalist and equilibrium models which had dominated anthropological research over the previous twenty years were partly supplanted by models which stressed the importance of conflict. The 'conflict theorists' rather than attempting to produce a picture of the functional integration of political systems and the consensus of values and role expectations, drew on the observation that in most societies scarce resources are not equally distributed. Individuals and groups will seek to maximize their control over these resources, hence coming into conflict with others pursuing the same strategy. In contrast to the approach adopted by Gluckman which stressed the manner in which conflict institutionalised values, these writers stressed the way in which alternatives or inconsistencies within the scheme of values within society are manipulated in the course of struggles for power. In this formulation external factors of change continue to be important, but notions of culture contact and adjustment are replaced by an emphasis on the way in which new resources of power are exploited in the context of, and contribute to the changing relationships of power within societies.[1]

---

[1] J. Rex, Key Problems of Sociological Theory (London, 1961); P.C. Lloyd, 'The Political Structure of African Kingdoms, an Exploratory Model', M. Gluckman and F. Eggan (eds.) Political Systems and the Distribution of Power, A.S.A. Monographs 2, (London, 1965); P.C. Lloyd, 'Conflict Theory and Yoruba Kingdoms', I.M. Lewis (ed.), History and Social Anthropology, A.S.A. Monographs 7 (London, 1968).

Under the influence of 'conflict theory', and of Easton's political systems analysis, political process supplanted political structure as the principal focus of analysis, and this tendency was re-inforced by the growing importance of a school of anthropologists who drew on Weberian 'action theory'. The accounts of the latter writers centre on the activities of 'political man' ever impelled in the pursuit of power, and the role in political process of 'non group' collectivities, 'factions', 'ego-centric networks' and 'action sets'. Political life is presented in terms of a continuing 'game' in which every man is scheming to maximize his power. While the focus on conflict, process and strategy has obvious appeal for an historian concerned with the analysis of change through time, this approach, particularly in its 'action theory' variant, also has serious limitations. It has a tendency to atomize society and to fail to point to the key cleavages around which conflict coalesces, or to fully explore the structural constraints on individuals' choices and strategies. The way in which power differs in differing societies is not always rigorously explored and there is also a tendency to take the rules of the game, dominant norms and values, as given and outside the arena in which the struggle for power takes place.[1]

A second body of literature also provided perspectives and questions which proved useful in understanding and interpreting Pedi history and society as this study progressed. This was produced by a growing school of economic anthropology in France which drew heavily on Marxist theory and whose writings provided important insights into the nature of power and the loci and form of conflict in non-capitalist - particularly lineage, but also more politically centralized - societies. Their concern to identify and analyse 'modes of production' and 'social formations' led them along an increasingly holistic path and to investigate not only

---

[1] For an overview of this literature, see A. Cohen, 'Political Anthropology: the analysis of the symbolism of power relations', Man, 4 (1969) and A. Cohen, Two Dimensional Man.

economic relations and structures but also those of kinship, ideology and politics and their inter-relationship.[1] They thus provided an important corrective to the atomizing tendency of 'action theorists' and a blinkered focus on political process.

These anthropologists while far from unified in approach focused on a number of key areas. They sought to analyse the units of production or redistribution of products and of relations in work. This in turn led to a consideration of the role of kinship, the nature of relationships between seniors and juniors (elders and cadets) and of matrimonial exchanges, (marriage settlements, dowry and brideprice). These investigators also examined the extent to which tribute was paid to higher social strata, whether there was political control over exchanges, and the extent to which social stratification defined groups of producers and non-producers. Particularly suggestive for the Pedi case was Meillassoux's stress on the cyclical renewal of the relations of production over time, and his argument that in self-sustaining agricultural communities power is derived from control over subsistence which in turn is derived not from control over the means of production but the means of physiological re-production - women. His approach highlights the importance of the control over women and bridewealth goods in the relationship between seniors and juniors. Terray and Rey have debated whether the relationship between juniors and seniors is one of exploitation or gives rise to divisions of class. Terray, while accepting that exploitation and economic classes 'in themselves' exist, suggests that in societies dominated by use value rather than exchange value (that is, not dominated by capitalist production and exchange), exploitation remains relatively constant, and generalized class conflict and class consciousness does not develop. He also suggests

---

[1] See, for example, E. Terray, Marxism and 'Primitive' Societies (New York, 1972); C. Meillassoux, 'From Reproduction to Production, A Marxist Approach to Economic Anthropology', Economy and Society, 1 (1972); M. Bloch (ed.) Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology (London, 1975); D. Seddon (ed.) Relations of Production (London, 1978).

that at the political level the concrete social groups through which classes are realized or embodied have neither the cohesion nor the permanence to ensure the appearance of a truly collective consciousness. Terray has also attempted to show the extent to which a specific mode of the drawing off, allocation and utilization of surplus lies at the heart of a mode of production and is linked to political and ideological superstructures,[1] and Godelier and others have stressed the importance of the ideological underpinning of the power of ruling groups.[2]

This study exploits the questions rather than the categories developed by this group of anthropologists and does not attempt to situate itself explicitly in a theoretical framework which, although illuminating, remains in the early stages of formulation, lacks consensus on basic concepts and problems, focuses on structure rather than process, and is still open to the criticism that the models constructed are, in the main, no more than generalizations of relationships found in a limited range of West African societies.[3]

Thus, while these two bodies of anthropological literature provided theoretical and comparative perspectives, and led to a determination to blend a concern with the structure and content of relationships of power with an account of economic and political process, it was in the interaction of this broad approach and the material available on Pedi

---

[1] E. Terray, 'Classes and Class Consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', M. Bloch (ed.) Marxist Analyses.

[2] M. Godelier et al., 'Anthropology, History and Ideology', Critique of Anthropology, 6 (1976).

[3] For overviews of this literature see R. Firth, 'The Sceptical Anthropologist', in Bloch (ed.), Marxist Analyses; J. Coppans and D. Seddon, 'Marxism and Anthropology, a Preliminary Survey', in Seddon, Relations of Production; R. Law, 'In Search of a Marxist Perspective on Pre-Colonial Tropical Africa', Journal of African History, 19, 3 (1978). See also, Review Articles in Critique of Anthropology, 4, 13 and 14 (1979).

history that the arguments presented in this thesis were formulated. Therefore, as - and probably more - important to the development of this study as new theoretical perspectives was the exploitation of hitherto unused historical sources. These include material in the records of the Z.A.R. and the British administration of the Transvaal; but crucially important were the Archives of the Berlin Missionary Society which had not been exploited by previous studies (indeed, have barely been used by historians of southern Africa), and recently discovered diaries of missionaries.

These sources include the correspondence between missionaries settled in, and on the periphery of the Pedi domain, mission station diaries, personal and travel diaries. They also include life histories and genealogies of converts and prominent Pedi, collections of oral traditions and detailed descriptions of economic and political process within Pedi society and information on the under classes within Boer society. They provide an alternative view to, and amplification of, the records of Transvaal administrations, and revealing material on the missionaries' own views of and roles in events. The life histories contained in the sources have also assisted the attempt to people this history and to allow the voices of those people to be heard. Periods of fieldwork were undertaken in Sekhukhuneland in 1976 which, while valuable in conveying some sense of the texture of the society and the current language of political argument, yielded a limited reward in terms of perspective or information on the period covered by this study. A particularly valuable by-product of these periods of field research, however, was the location and translation of printed vernacular histories of chiefdoms in the area, the most useful of which was a detailed history of the Tau.[1]

---

[1] E.M. Ramaila, Setlogo Sa Batau (Pretoria, 1938?). A more detailed discussion of sources is contained in Appendix I; see also, P. Delius, 'Conflict and Change in Pedi Society', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, University of London, 7.5.1975, for comments on existing collections of oral traditions. The personal diary of A. Nachtigal, now in the archives of the University of South Africa along with A. Merensky's account of his years in the Transvaal, A. Merensky, Erinnerungen aus dem Missionsleben in Transvaal 1859-1882 (Berlin, 1899), 2nd ed., provide a detailed account of the two principal missionaries at work in the eastern Transvaal in the years 1860-1880.

Although the focus of this thesis is on the political system which emerged in the aftermath of the *difaqane*, it opens with a tentative account of the processes of conflict and change which led to the establishment and expansion of the hegemony of the Maroteng chiefdom in the latter half of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century. This provides a background against which subsequent transformations can be viewed, but as importantly the forms of dominance and the nature of control established in the earlier period provided a model which was drawn on during the development of the post-*difaqane* polity. The fact that the rulers of the latter could establish a connection with a dominant lineage in the former also provided them with an important, if somewhat ambivalent source of politicial legitimacy. One of the most important consequences of this was that the relationships of rank and status which had existed in the earlier polity provided one set of terms in which argument was conducted about the political order in the political system established in the nineteenth century.

In the 1820s the impact of the *difaqane* and particularly the conquest of the Pedi heartland by the Ndwandwe led to a profound rupture in relationships of power and authority. Some chiefdoms avoided extinction, however, others were reconstituted after the Ndwandwe departed, and new leaders and political communities emerged. It was in this context that Sekwati, a junior son of the previous royal house, established his rule, and the ascendancy of a reconstructed Maroteng chiefdom. This result was achieved by a skilful combination of coercion and diplomacy, control and redistribution of scarce resources, particularly cattle, the incorporation of captives and refugees and the elaboration of relationships of clientage. The polity which emerged in this period represented in many senses a new political system shaped by the changed and changing circumstances

of the post-difaqane Transvaal. Sekwati achieved power by exploiting, incorporating and partially refashioning existing relationships and forms of power. He was not in a position to restructure these relationships radically or to attempt to extinguish the remaining independence of the subject groups, and a fundamental tension remained within the polity.

Sekwati and the Maroteng not only contended with internal rivals for power but also confronted the danger and reality of Zulu, Swazi and to a lesser extent, Shangane attack. By the early 1850s however, the Pedi had constructed fortified defensive positions, adopted new military techniques, incorporated new military technology and survived a series of attacks. In 1845 a new dimension was added to the regional balance and relationships of power by the establishment of a Trekker community based on the town of Ohrigstad . These settlers' attempts to secure and enforce title to land and to extract labour and other forms of tribute from neighbouring and initially subject African societies led to mounting resistance to their rule. These conflicts led both to an extension of the authority of the Maroteng, and to a Trekker attempt in 1852 to break Pedi power in order to restore their control over the region. This attempt failed, and by 1857 the settler community had been forced to recognise Pedi independence and the need to establish a framework for co-existence.

The additional documentation generated after the arrival of the B.M.S. missionaries in the eastern Transvaal in 1859 and the establishment of mission stations in the Pedi domain in the early years of the 1860s enables a fuller picture to be constructed of the polity, its internal processes, and external relationships. The second section of the thesis begins with a sketch of the structure and content of key relationships of power in the polity. This stresses the importance of concepts of rank and ritual superiority, the role of the paramount as wife-giver to subordinate chiefdoms, and the part played by cattle and clientage in underpinning Maroteng power. The partially normative and structural account provided

is not, however, designed to stand alone but to complement preceding and succeeding descriptions of economic and political process.

The missionaries who settled in the Pedi domain were particularly struck by the extent of Pedi involvement in migrant labour, and the accumulation of guns through migrancy played a crucial part in the growing power of the polity. An attempt is therefore made to describe the system of labour migrancy, to explore the complex and changing patterns of production and exchange which promoted it, to show the role played by the paramountcy in instigating and controlling the movement of men to labour markets and to situate the causes and consequences of migrancy in the context of the changing relationships of, and struggles for, power within the polity.

These struggles, both amongst royal agnates and between the Maroteng and subject chiefdoms, were brought into sharp focus by the death of Sekwati in 1861. The succession of Sekhukhune and the records of the disputes which accompanied and followed his rise to power allow an examination of the nature of political process within the polity, illuminate the bases of political followings and provide evidence on the role of political norms. After his accession, Sekhukhune was threatened not only by the internal and external machinations of his rivals for the paramountcy, but also by the possibility that the death of Sekwati would encourage subordinate groups to restrict, contest or reject the authority of the Maroteng. Sekhukhune attempted to counter this danger, and once he had established his grip on the paramountcy set about entrenching and extending Maroteng power. These attempts and the struggles which ensued yield insights into the extent and limitations of Maroteng dominance and the impact on it of wider processes of economic and political change.

The uncertainties of the interregnum and the conflicts consequent on the succession also increased the vulnerability of the polity to attack or external intervention. The external political relations of the polity in the 1860s were shaped principally by internal political process and by the danger of a hostile alliance being formed against it by the Z.A.R. and the Swazi kingdom. The regional balance of power, however, underwent a profound change in 1869 when the Swazi army suffered a major defeat at the hands of the Pedi. The Swazi defeat also undermined the authority of the Z.A.R. whose power in the eastern Transvaal was crucially dependent on its ability to call on the support of the Swazi regiments. In the following years, the extent to which the Pedi polity served as an alternative focus of power and authority to the Swazi kingdom and the Z.A.R. was enhanced. The Swazi military menace had previously provided one important centripetal force which shaped the relationship between the Maroteng and their subordinates, and its reduction allowed fuller rein to the centrifugal tendencies within the polity. The power of the Swazi kingdom was, however, far from broken.

This section of the thesis concludes with an examination of the way in which the growth of Christian belief in the society and the impact of missionaries on it was influenced by the cross currents of political conflict and economic change, and highlighted key relationships and forms of power. It concentrates in particular on the extent to which a Christian community had formed prior to the arrival of the missionaries and the extent to which this group constituted the cutting edge of Christianity within the polity. It also examines the basis of the conflicts between the converts, the missionaries and the paramount, and the events which led to, and the reasons for, the closure of all the mission stations within the Pedi domain by 1866. These events shaped the reality and mythology

of the development of the B.M.S. in the Transvaal and the growth of Christianity within Pedi society. The antagonism between Sekhukhune and the missionaries also played a vital role in the conflicts which flared in the eastern Transvaal in the following decade.

Just as the early history of the polity was shaped both by the difaqane and its aftermath, and the initial impact of the arrival of the Trekkers in the Transvaal, so its subsequent development also requires an examination of wider struggles within the region. In particular, the expansion of the Pedi polity in the 1870s, usually accounted for by invoking a mono-causal internal dynamic, requires examination in this context. The movement of population into the area of hegemony of the Maroteng and the extent to which groups settled in zones of previously dual or Z.A.R. authority claimed undivided loyalty to Sekhukhune was partly an index of struggles which developed between the Z.A.R. and initially subject societies, landlords and tenants, and masters and servants over rights to land, labour, rent and tax. The intensity of the struggles and the incidende of conflicts was partly shaped by changing labour relations within Boer-dominated society, by the impact of the development of the diamond fields in Griqualand-West and gold fields in the north-east Transvaal and by increased state intervention. The power of the polity and the extent to which its authority was invoked was the product of a complex interplay of struggles within and beyond its borders. Thus in the first chapter in the third section, while the object of analysis remains the history of the polity, the focus of the account shifts beyond its heartland to its Transvaal context.

At the centre of the conflicts in the eastern Transvaal in the mid-1870s was a community led by Sekhukhune's younger brother, Johannes Dinkwanyane, which left Botsabele, the principal B.M.S. mission station

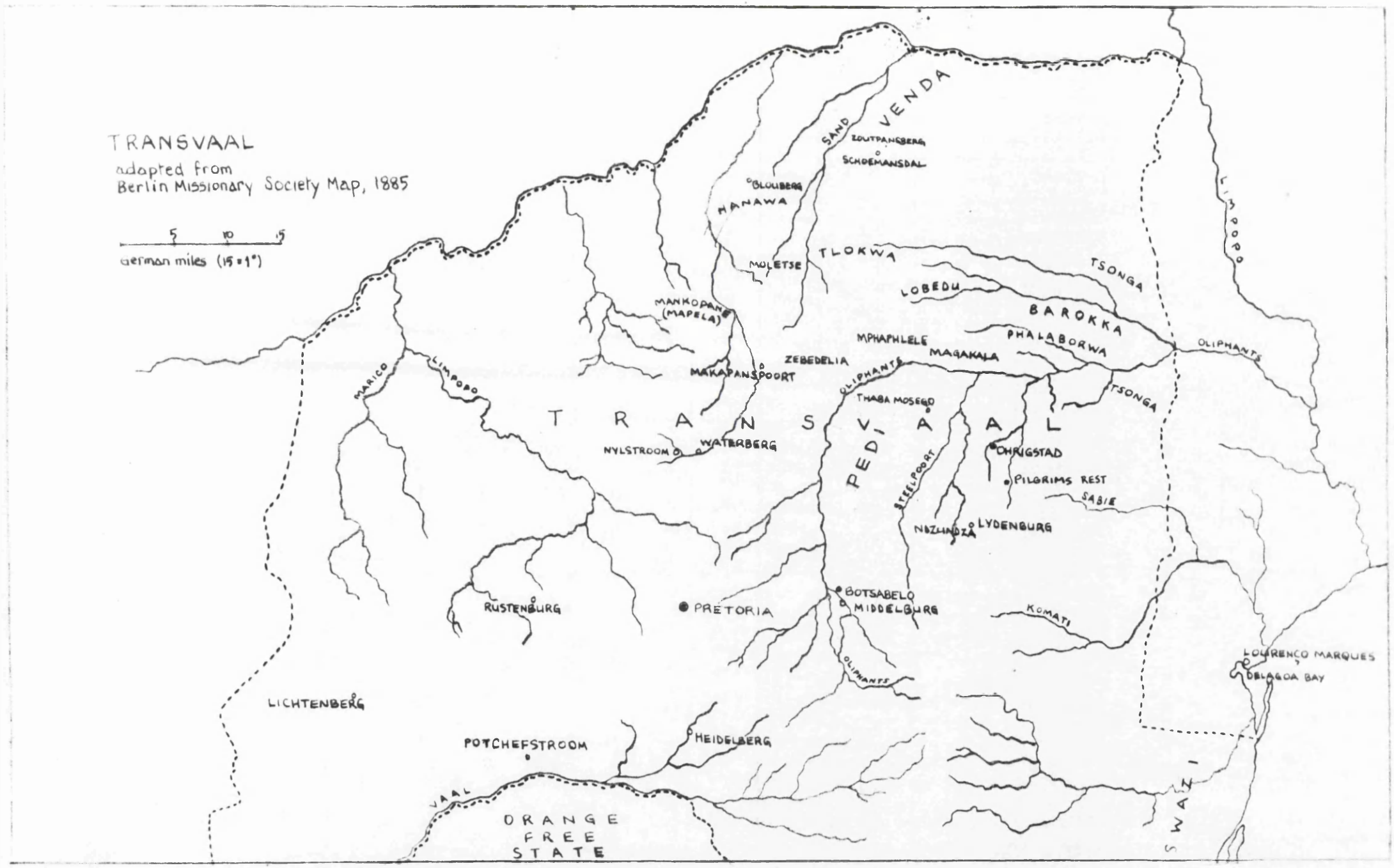
in the region, in 1873. An understanding of the composition, actions and ideology of this group calls for an account of the history of the Christian communities which formed on mission stations in the latter half of the 1860s and recognized the authority of the Z.A.R. It is argued that the decision of Dinkwanyane and his followers to leave Botsabelo was shaped by the forms of production and relationships of property, exaction and control established on the station in combination with the effect of a changing economic climate and increasing state intervention. On their departure, this group attempted to maintain themselves as a Christian community while securing an enlarged degree of independence from church and state, by purchasing their own land. Thwarted in this ambition, they increasingly invoked the power and authority of the Pedi polity to claim rights to land and to reject the orders of both the citizens and officials of the Z.A.R. The community also came to represent an alternative for African Christians to settling or remaining on mission stations, and an increasingly serious threat to the control of the missionaries over their converts. The demands which were voiced with growing stridency by sections of the white community in this period that the Z.A.R. should intervene militarily to re-establish its authority over the region focused, as much if not more, on the activities and attitudes of Dinkwanyane as on those of the Pedi paramount.

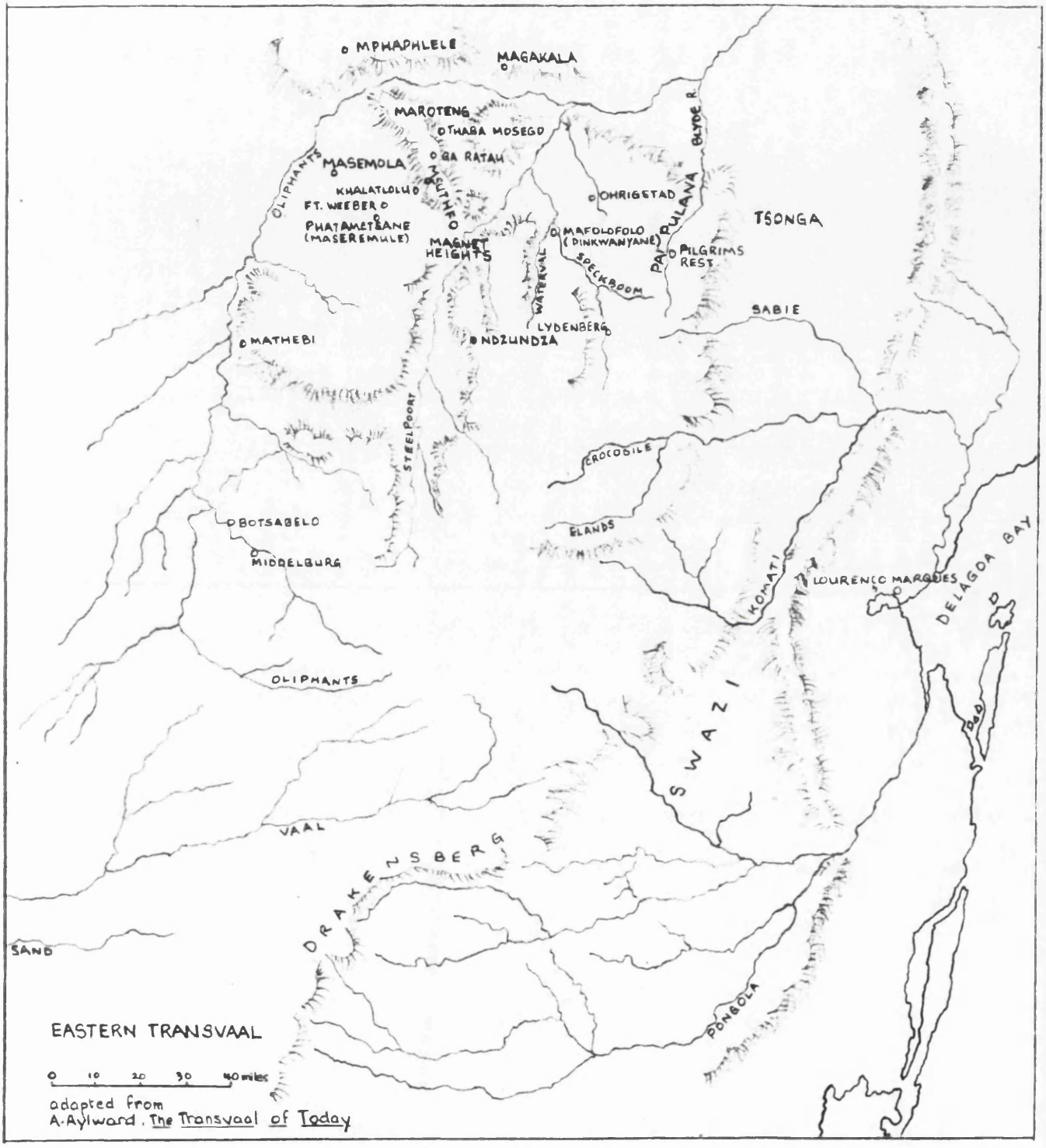
The final section of the thesis attempts to show the way in which the processes of conflict and change outlined in the preceding chapters meshed to mould the perceptions, produce the conditions and shape the events which led to the outbreak of war in 1876. It is argued that existing accounts are flawed because they do not explore this wider context, because they are mono-causal and because they misconceive the position and role of the paramount and the nature of the polity. A description is provided of the policies pursued by the Maroteng and of

their relationship with key subordinate groups. An analysis is attempted of the changing perception of the Pedi polity within the white community in the eastern Transvaal, and the central role played by local missionaries and officials in shaping this perception and forcing the confrontations with the paramount and his subordinates which culminated in war. It is also suggested that the Z.A.R. central government played a larger and more direct role in these events than has previously been believed and the course of the war is briefly charted to its stalemated conclusion. The impact of the campaign on the Z.A.R. and on the Pedi polity, up to the British annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, is also sketched.

The final chapter deals with the events which led to the resumption of war in the eastern Transvaal in 1878. The narrative is developed against two major backdrops. The first is provided by the nature and aims of imperial intervention in the Transvaal. The new administration sought to overhaul the state which it had inherited from the Z.A.R., and to enforce its control and the rights which it claimed. These objectives were not easily made compatible with the continued independence of the Pedi polity. The policies adopted by the Pedi rulers and the conflicts which arose were also crucially influenced by struggles being waged within the polity. These internal processes form the second backdrop to the account. An attempt is made to explore the extent to which the initiatives and response of the paramountcy were shaped by the need to recover from the ravages of the 1876-1877 war and the attempts of the Maroteng chiefdom to repair its damaged authority, and of Sekhukhune to maintain his popular support. The military campaign which culminated in the successful storming of the Maroteng capital in November of 1879 is outlined and it is argued that the destruction of Pedi independence was

a vital turning point in the struggle to bring the African population of the Transvaal under colonial control. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that with the defeat of the Zulu kingdom and the Pedi polity in the same year, the balance of power in southern African tipped decisively in favour of colonial society.


TRANSVAAL
adapted from
Berlin Missionary Society Map, 1885
5 10 15
german miles (15 = 1°)
VENDA
SAND
ZOUTPANSBERG
SCHOEMANSDAL
BLOUBERG
HANAWA
MOLETSE
TLOKWA
TSONGA
LOBEDU
BAROKKA
PHALABORWA
LIMPOPO
MANKOPANE (MAPELA)
MPHAPHLELE
MAGAKALA
OLIPHANTS
ZEBEDELIA
MAKAPANSPOORT
MARICO
LIMPOPO
THABA MOSEGO
TRANSVAAL
NYLSTROOM
WATERBERG
PEDI
STEELPOORT
CHRISTIAD
PILGRIMS REST
SABIE
NDZUNDZA
LYDENBURG
RUSTENBURG
PRETORIA
BOTSABELO
MIDDELBURG
KOMATI
LOURENÇO MARQUES
DELAGOA BAY
LICHTENBERG
POTCHEFSTROOM
HEIDELBERG
VAAL
ORANGE FREE STATE
SWAZI


MPHAPHLELE
MAGAKALA
MAROTENG
THABA MOSEGO
GA RATAH
MASEMOLA
KHALATLOLLO
FT. WEEBER
PHATAMETSANE (MASEREMULE)
SOUTHFO
MAGNET HEIGHTS
OLIPHANTS
BLYDE R.
OHRIGSTAD
TSONGA
MAFOLOFOLO (PINKWANYANE)
PILGRIMS REST
PAD PULANA
SPECKBOOM
WATERVAL
LYDENBERG
NDZUNDZA
SABIE
MATHEBI
STEELPOORT
CROCODILE
ELANDS
BOTSABELO
MIDDELBURG
KOMATI
LOURENCO MARQUES
DELAGOA BAY
OLIPHANTS
SWAZI
VAAL
DRAKENSBERG
SAND
PONGOLA
EASTERN TRANSVAAL
0 10 20 30 40 miles
adapted from
A. Aylward. The Transvaal of Today

CHAPTER ONE

PART ONE

The Establishment of Maroteng Hegemony

In the eastern Transvaal the interior plateau drops away to the low-lying plains which stretch east to the sea. The flat, bare highveld gives way to the undulations and relatively dense vegetation of the middleveld and bushveld; and to the tropical lowveld. It was this region of ecological contrast and transition which in the eighteenth century provided the backdrop and context for the emergence of the Pedi polity to power and prominence.

The comparatively restricted heartland of the Pedi domain in the period 1828-1880 lay in the north-east of this region, falling across the Great Eastern Escarpment in the triangle formed by the confluence of the Oliphants and Steelpoort rivers. Here the escarpment divides into three distinct mountain ranges. In the south-east the Sekhukhune mountains lie along the western bank of the Steelpoort River while on the northern side of the Oliphants River, the Strydpoort mountains run from east to west. Almost connecting these two ranges and traversing the triangle formed by the river courses are the Leolu mountains. From its highest peak of 6330 feet in the south this range tapers off to the north, and consists of a complex system of conical mountains forming numerous deep valleys and gorges.[1]

To the east of the Leolu mountains is lowveld, while the bulk of the area to the west has been classified as mountainous bushveld. This region lies at an average of three to six thousand feet above sea level. It is dissected by innumerable valleys and in the nineteenth century was well covered with trees and shrubs. To the south and east respectively are

---

[1] Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 3-8.

plateau and middleveld areas which are largely extensions and variations of the bushveld zone. According to the simplified classification employed by the Tomlinson Commission this area today has four principal veld types. The greater part of it is sour bushveld with a narrow intrusion over the Escarpment of sour grassveld. There are also relatively limited areas of eastern lowveld and western thornveld. Of crucial significance to much of the western portion of the country is that it falls within the rain shadow of the Escarpment and consequently suffers from comparatively low and erratic rainfall. The tsetse fly belt, although making some advances in the 1820s and 1830s, ran through the lowveld to the east. The country however harboured diseases fatal for unsalted horses in the summer months.[1]

By the end of the eighteenth century, the eastern Transvaal was populated by a multitude of groups organized into a multiplicity of chiefdoms. The descendants of these have been categorised as Roka, Kwena, Koni, Tau, Pai, Kutswe and Pulana on the basis of totemic affiliation and tradition of origin. Settled in the west of the region were groups of Transvaal Ndebele. These were principally distinguished by the fact that, unlike the Tau, Koni and others who claimed Nguni origins, they continued to speak an Nguni dialect.[2]

---

[1] Ibid.; U.G. 61/1955, Report of the Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa, vol. 4, chapter 12, pp. 22-46, 112-25; vol. 8, chapter 19, appendix 4; T. Wangemann, Lebensbilder aus Südafrika (Berlin 1876), p. 186. This area lies in the summer rainfall zone. There are significant local variations in precipitation but these are, in the main, contained within an average rainfall range of 15-30 inches.

[2] Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 10-11, 16-17; D. Ziervogel, The Eastern Sotho (Pretoria, 1954), pp. 3, 10, 107-8, 110-11; H.M. Fourie, Amandebele van Fene Mahlangu en hun Religieus - Sociaal Leven (Zwolle, 1921), pp. 2-55; N.J. van Warmelo, Transvaal Ndebele Texts (Pretoria, 1930), pp. 6-10. Broadly, the Kwena have traditions of northern and western origin. The Roka have traditions of northern origin. See, in particular, H.O. Monnig, 'The Baroka Ba Nkwana', African Studies, XXII, 4. With the exception of the Transvaal Ndebele, all these groups have, on linguistic and cultural criteria, been categorized as Transvaal Sotho.

Maroteng traditions record that they were an offshoot of the Kgatla then settled in the Pretoria district of the Transvaal. After crossing the Leolu mountains they settled in the Steelpoort river valley. Generational dating suggests that they had arrived in the region by 1650. They were relatively late arrivals having been preceded by groups from most of the above categories.[1]

None of these categories in fact describes a homogeneous reality. Most include groups with divergent totems and traditions of origin and they all refer only to the ruling nucleus within chiefdoms. Equally each chiefdom consisted of individuals of widely different ancestry who made up the various constituent groups attached and subordinated to the ruling group but who would usually have outnumbered it. Krige pointed out that the 'inextricable tangle' of relationships which he observed and described in the 1930s was not simply a consequence of the upheavals of the nineteenth century but was the consequence of processes of considerable historical depth.[2]

Oral traditions are of limited assistance to attempts to unpick this tangle. Modern traditions are virtually silent on events pre-dating the nineteenth century. Traditions collected earlier throw a feeble and faltering light on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and cover an extremely limited range of groups, focussing mainly on the Maroteng and Tau. They are also largely a political history of, and charter for, the ruling groups. The dominant themes are origin, migration and fission. The latter processes often appear to have stemmed from succession disputes which led to the departure of one or more sons or brothers of the ruler,

---

1 Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 12-16; D.R. Hunt, 'An Account of the Bapedi', Bantu Studies, V, 4, (1935), pp. 275-77; J.A. Winter, 'The Tradition of Ra'lolo', South African Journal of Science, IX (1912), pp. 88-9; Merensky, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bapeli', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 327-9.

2 J.D. Krige, 'Traditional Origins and Tribal Relationships of the Sotho of the Northern Transvaal', Bantu Studies, XI, 4 (1937), p. 327.

along with their followers and which could result in the foundation of independent chiefdoms. Legassick has described the emergence of chiefdoms linked through their ruling nuclei as the development of lineage clusters and points to the expansion of these as a key process at work in the history of the Sotho Tswana between 1500-1800. He also recognises but fails to pursue the importance of fission within chiefdoms originating from conflicts between ruling lineages and subordinate groups and disputes within subject groups. Conflict and fission were not the sole prerogatives of the dominant lineages and considerably more complex processes were probably at work than a concentration on the expansion of lineage clusters will reveal.[1] There is, however, at present little evidence to enable historians to penetrate behind the explanations offered by ruling groups of the pasts of the societies they command.

It is nonetheless clear from the composition of these chiefdoms that as important as the process of lineage segmentation, indeed, probably a factor in it, was the absorption and fusion of pre-existing groups into new political communities and the incorporation of new immigrants by established chiefdoms. A concentration on the traditions of ruling lineages inevitably tends to stress their decisive contribution to the unfolding pattern of events and the developing social forms. More probable is that the eastern Transvaal witnessed prolonged processes of socio-economic change <u>in situ</u> shaped as much by the nature of the previous societies as by that of intruding groups. The Tau historian Ramaila has, for example, pointed to the way in which the Tau derived their language and key institutions from the societies they encountered in the eastern Transvaal. Tau traditions

---

[1] M. Legassick, 'The Sotho-Tswana Peoples before 1800', L.M. Thompson (ed.) <u>African Societies in Southern Africa</u> (London, 1969), pp. 98-110.

suggest, for example, that they adopted the practice and form of initiation from them. In the Maroteng case at least four generations passed before they secured a dominant position in the area. The degree of cultural homogeneity that had emerged by the nineteenth century was thus probably the consequence of a long history of local interaction rather than a relatively brief period of Maroteng hegemony.[1]

The emergence in the latter half of the eighteenth century of a relatively powerful polity under Maroteng rulership has been the major focus of historical interest in this area. Although no major study has been undertaken, accounts which have touched on these developments have relied heavily on the impact of trade as the motor for political centralisation.[2] There is, however, no necessary relationship between trade and centralisation. David Hedges' recent research on the role of trade in changing relationships of power in southern Mozambique and Natal has shown that a convincing account needs to explore the interaction between specific modes of production and particular and changing natural environments and patterns of trade.[3] Such an account of the processes which led to the emergence of the Maroteng paramountcy must await further research and new evidence. It is not possible to do more here than to sketch the process of centralisation, to tentatively suggest some of the factors which promoted it, and to set the scene for the events and problems which constitute the principle concern of this study.

---

1 Ibid., p. 97, suggests that 'The homogeneity of the "Central Sotho" of the eastern Transvaal can be explained by the era of Pedi ... [Maroteng] hegemony'; Ramaila, Setlogo (Pretoria, 1938), pp 13, 24-5; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', pp. 88-91.

2 For example, Legassick, 'Sotho-Tswana', pp. 107-9, and R. Gray and S. Marks 'Southern Africa and Madagascar', R. Gray (ed.) The Cambridge History of Africa, 1600-1790, 4, (Cambridge 1975), pp. 410-11.

3 D. Hedges, 'Trade and Politics in Southern Mozambique and Zululand in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries', unpub. Ph.D. thesis University of London, 1978.

Centralised authority was not a novelty of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Maroteng and Tau traditions record that on their arrival in the area they recognised the paramountcy of pre-existing groups. The Tau recognised groups with the elephant and the hyena as their totems as the 'lords of the land'.[1] Their ritual supremacy was acknowledged, they initiated the various phases of the agricultural cycle and they were entitled to a tribute of certain products of the hunt. The Maroteng recall that the Kwena or Mongatane were dominant on their arrival. They had ritual and judicial supremacy and demanded a nominal tribute from their subordinates of thatching grass and poles.[2]

The traditions suggest that in the ensuing years these chiefdoms underwent twin processes of, on the one hand, the elaboration of the internal power of the chief and ruling group, and on the other, an increase of their power relative to neighbouring groups which allowed them to secure a local hegemony. While the reasons for these developments remain obscure, the traditions do contain some hints of their possible nature. The Tau appear to have been relatively strong in numbers and wealthy in cattle when they settled near the Oliphants River. The Kgatla from whom the Maroteng separated were renowned metal-workers. Hunt's informants told him that until the difaqane in the 1820s, Maroteng chiefs kept a small community of metal-workers living under their close protection. There is also evidence that the Maroteng and ruling groups within chiefdoms monopolised the supply of iron implements. Maroteng traditions suggest that while they were armed with iron battle-axes and assegais, the Kwena or Mongatane were mainly armed with bows and arrows. The possession of iron implements not only offered

---

[1] Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 24-5.

[2] Hunt, 'Account', pp. 277-9.

agricultural and military advantages but there is also evidence that iron hoes were used for the payment of bridewealth in conjunction with cattle. It is thus possible that a partial monopoly of prestige iron goods and/or wealth in cattle combined with polygyny enabled the Maroteng and Tau to increase their numbers relatively rapidly by securing women from groups less well-endowed.[1] Certainly their traditions suggest that exchange and assimilation played the key role in their growing power. The Tau recall that some of the groups they encountered when they first settled in the area bartered skin karosses for cattle, that they lived in peace with them and that 'they just swallowed them up without any fighting'.[2]

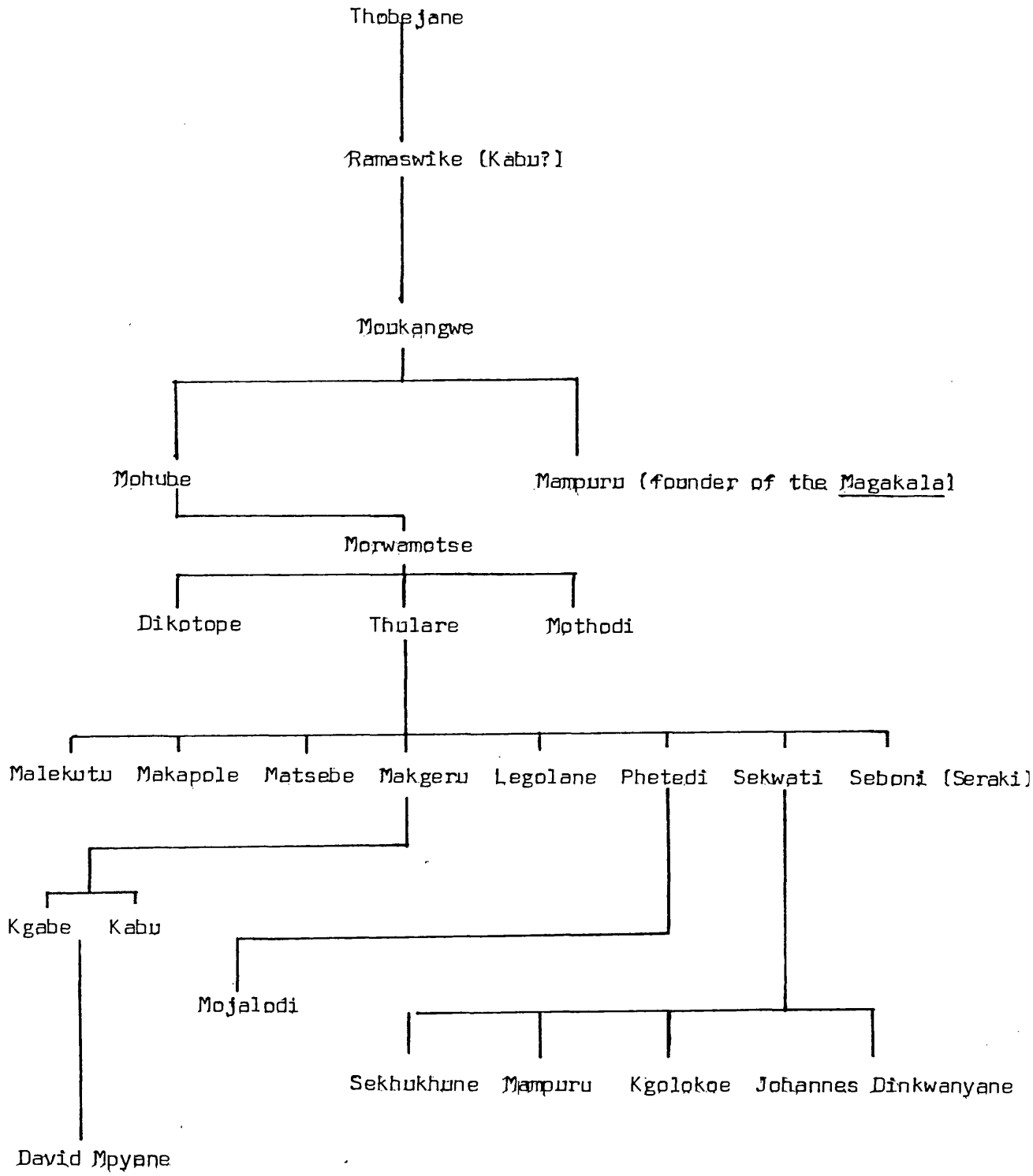
There is the danger that historical distance lends an excessive tranquillity to these decades. However, Maroteng, Magakala, Roka and Tau traditions suggest that in the latter half of the eighteenth century these relatively peaceful processes of change were overtaken by a marked escalation of conflict which culminated in a radical re-ordering of regional relationships of power and authority. Tau traditions record a series of wars between various Tau chiefdoms and with their neighbours. These appear to have been in part a consequence of the Masemola chiefdom attempting to entrench and extend its authority over neighbouring and other Tau chiefdoms. Maroteng traditions focus on the events which led to the establishment of their paramountcy. Conflicts which started in the reign of Mohube, escalated during the regency of his brother Mampuru and culminated in the Maroteng effectively challenging the dominant position of the Mongatane.

---

[1] Ibid.; Winter, 'Ra'lolo' pp. 88-93; P.J. Quinn, Foods and Feeding Habits of the Bapedi (Johannesburg, 1959), pp. 18-20; M. Wilson, 'Changes in Social Structure in Southern Africa: The Relevance of Kinship Studies to the Historian', Thompson (ed.), African Societies, pp. 78-9. Wilson concentrates her analysis on cattle, but it is also suggestive for the role of iron goods in these circumstances.

[2] Ramaila, Setlogo, p. 24.

A Skeleton Genealogy of the Maroteng Royals Mentioned in the Text



Sources: U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal 2, pp. 342-3; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 327-58; Winter, 'Ba'olo', pp. 87-99; Hunt, 'Account', pp. 320-21; Van Warmelo, 'Genealogy.' pp. 45-55; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 15; T.A. S.N.A. 74/1325/07, History Mafefe C.A. Knothe. 15.5.07. There are discrepancies in the sources over the rulers who preceded Moukangwe and this is even more marked for those preceding Thobejane.

The Maroteng extended their control over the region. They succeeded in bringing the most powerful chiefdoms, including the Masemola and other Tau groups, under their paramountcy, but did not extinguish their local power. They elaborated and extended the powers of the paramountcy. Their most fundamental innovations were to increase the military obligations of subordinate chiefdoms and to insist that their chiefs took their principal wives from the paramountcy thus ensuring both political leverage and inflated bridewealth.[1]

The regency of Mampuru also witnessed protracted struggles amongst royal agnates within the chiefdom. Mampuru resisted installing Mohube's heir Morwamotse as ruler but was defeated and with his followers moved to the north and founded the Magakala chiefdom. In the ensuing years this chiefdom from its domain north of the Olifants River secured a regional hegemony but accepted the over-arching authority of the Maroteng Pedi chiefdom from which its ruling nucleus had originated.[2]

The apogee of Pedi power and prestige was achieved by the Maroteng chiefdom under Morwamotse's son Thulare who wrested the rulership from his brother Dikotope and who is estimated to have succeeded between 1780 and 1790. During the reign of Thulare (1790?-1820?) and the brief encumbancy of his son Malekutu (1820?-22?) the authority of the polity achieved its widest extent. Combined armies under Maroteng leadership campaigned over a vast area of the Transvaal. Raids were launched north into the Zoutpansberg district, Kgatla and Ndebele groups resident in the central Transvaal were attacked and Pedi armies reached as far west as the Fokeng in the area of

---

[1] Hunt, 'Account', pp. 278-82; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', pp. 88-96; Mönnig, Baroka, pp. 172-3, U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 955.

[2] Ibid., T.A., S.N.A. 74, 1325/07, History Mafefe (Magakala alias Magadimane) by C.A. Knothe, 15. 5. 07.

modern Rustenburg and as far south as the Vaal. The Phalaborwa and other groups settled in the eastern lowveld also fell victim to Pedi attack.[1]

The full reasons for the apparent escalation of conflict in the region and the extension of political and military scale that emerged from it remain elusive. It is, however, possible to make some suggestions about the processes involved. The first is that the area supported a growing human and stock population and that by the middle of the eighteenth century choice agricultural and pastoral resources were the object of intensifying competition. It is, of course, in the absence of adequate demographic and statistical data, impossible to be certain of this process. Traditions do, however, suggest that such an increase in both stock and population took place. Winter's informant Ra'lolo told him that in the reign of Mohube's father Moukangwe the 'chiefdom grew rich in cattle, not taken from other tribes but peacefully bred in that splendid grazing country' (the Steelpoort valley).[2] Legassick and Omer-Cooper have suggested that lineage segmentation was partly related to population growth and even aside from possible natural increase the area appears to have been subject to continuing in-migration.[3] As suggested above it also seems likely that certain groups expanded their numbers considerably faster than others thus heightening their demand for key resources and leading them to infringe on the rights of weaker groups.

---

1 Merensky, 'Geshichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 329-32; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p.96; Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 38-42; P.L. Breutz, The Tribes of Rustenburg and Pilansberg Districts (Pretoria, 1953), pp. 63-4, 87-8; Krige, 'Traditional Origins', p. 337. Thulare's death is associated with an eclipse, Hunt, 'Account', p. 284, and Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 138. An eclipse would have been visible from the Pedi domain in 1817 and a near total eclipse affected the area in 1820. Thulare's death has been dated to 1820 on the basis of the greater magnitude of the latter; R. Gray, 'Annular Eclipse Maps', Journal of African History, IX, 1 (1968), p. 152.

2 Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p. 90.

3 Legassick, 'Sotho-Tswana', p. 98.

There are at least two versions of the origins of the conflicts. The first is that Mohube trespassed on the hunting grounds of a Koni group. The second is that he allowed his cattle to stray across their land and destroy their crops. There is also some evidence that droughts may have played a role in shaping the conflicts. The B.M.S. missionary Albert Nachtigal was told by Pedi informants that in the time of Morwamotse, Thulare's father, a severe drought gripped the land and local and foreign raiders plagued the population of the region. Existing climatological research relevant to the summer rainfall zone suggests periodic droughts and wet phases with a regularity of approximately twenty years, and the question of the influence of these climatic changes on the processes of socio-economic change outlined here warrants detailed investigation.[1]

The evidence which suggests that trade may have played an important part in these developments is rather fuller. It is nonetheless not rich enough to sustain a convincing account of its precise role in promoting political centralisation and expansion. Material on local and regional patterns of exchange is sparse, but it is possible these chiefdoms' escarpment domains and Pedi metal-working skills may have secured them a privileged and mediating position in the trade networks which spanned the highveld, bushveld and lowveld, and which linked their differing products and patterns of exchange. For example, certain lowveld groups notably the Phalaborwa and the 'Barokka' inhabited environments ill-suited to pastoral and agricultural production and were highly specialised metal extractors and workers dependent on the exchange of these goods to meet their subsistence requirements. Nineteenth century evidence suggests that the then Pedi polity played a key intermediary role between the metal

---

[1] Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p. 90; T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07, History Mafefe by C.A. Knothe, 15. 5. 07; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 97-8; Hedges, 'Trade and Politics', p. 7.

industries of the lowveld and societies to the south and west; a role which presumably developed in the previous centuries.[1]

From the middle of the sixteenth century there was growing activity by Portuguese and other European traders at Inhambane and Delagoa Bay. The trade they conducted centred on the exchange of beads, cloth and copper for ivory and horns from the interior. From the middle of the eighteenth century, keen European competition led to a boom in trade; ivory prices doubled, and north, eastern and highveld Transvaal networks of exchange were increasingly linked to the east coast. This was partly reflected in the fact that metal goods were brought to the coast for the first time and it may have resulted in a reorientation of trade away from the societies to the north. The heartland of the Pedi polity straddled trade routes leading to the Ndebele and Kgatla chiefdoms in the central Transvaal and the Kwena and Fokeng further west.[2] Maroteng tradition recalls the reign of Thulare as one in which direct links were forged with Delagoa Bay. One of his sons, Makgeru, journeyed there and secured a gun. The paramount was able to clothe two of his favourite subjects in European dress. The bulk of the trade, however, passed through Tsonga intermediaries who travelled to, and settled amongst, the societies of the eastern Transvaal. The chiefdoms in control of the escarpment, the gateway to the interior, were well placed to play a similar role in relation to the societies to the south and west. Chiefs appear to have secured a partial monopoly over trade. Thulare is remembered as having

---

1 A. Merensky, Beitrage zur Kenntniss Süd-Afrikas (Berlin, 1875), p. 106; T. Wangemann, Die Berliner Mission im Bassuto-Lande (Berlin, 1877), p.65; B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/2, Nachtigal's Reise Tagebuch, 14. 8. 62; E.J. Krige, 'Note on the Phalaborwa and their Morula complex', Bantu Studies, 11 (1937), pp. 361-3; T. Arbousset and F. Daumas, Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North-East of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town, 1846), p. 175.

2 Gray and Marks, 'Southern Africa', R. Gray (ed.), Cambridge History, pp. 408-12; A. Smith, 'Delagoa Bay and South-Eastern Africa', R. Gray and D. Birmingham (eds.), Precolonial African Trade (London, 1970), pp. 267-89; M. Wilson, 'The Sotho, Venda and Tsonga', M. Wilson and L.M. Thompson (eds.), Oxford History of South Africa, 1 (Oxford, 1969), pp. 144-9.

communities of metal workers and bead makers under his personal protection. Rulers accumulated ivory through tribute and through their control over collaborative manpower, usually age-set and regimental organisation, used for hunting big game. These forms of organisation were probably also the basis of trading expeditions. Chiefs also restricted and controlled the circulation of particular kinds of beads and types of cloth acquired through trade.[1]

The likelihood is that trade, in the context of the social relationships of production existing in the eastern Transvaal, facilitated differentiation in wealth and power within and between chiefdoms. In the main it assisted rulers to accumulate prestige goods, to attract and control subjects and clients and to entrench their pivotal position in internal systems of exchange and redistribution. It may also have led to attempts by ruling groups within chiefdoms to extend rights to tribute and male labour but the evidence is not available to periodise changes in these relationships in this region. Trade may also have provided additional incentive to competition for scarce resources. Significant in this light is the fact that one tradition suggests that disputes over hunting grounds were the initial source of the heightened conflict of the latter half of the eighteenth century. Equally those societies advantageously situated in relation to required resources and trading routes may have derived exceptional benefits as may those chiefdoms sufficiently powerful to assert claims to such resources. Part of the explanation for the fact that the Maroteng ultimately achieved regional hegemony may relate to the possibility that their domain in the Steelpoort River valley, both encompassed

---

[1] Hunt, 'Account', p. 284; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p. 96; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 332; A Merensky, 'Waffen, Zauberwurfel und Schmuckkoralen der Südafrikaner', Zeitschrift fur Ethnographie, XIV (1882), pp. 543-5; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 23. 9. 61; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 594-5, 25. 5. 1869.

a superior pastoral and agricultural environment and lay across a key trade route linking the coast to the societies of the interior.[1]

However, as Hedges has pointed out in relation to Zululand, the expansion of trade is a less convincing explanation for conflict in this context than its contraction. In the closing years of the eighteenth century, Portuguese traders secured a monopoly of the trade at Delagoa Bay. The exclusion of other European traders led to a marked downturn in trade, particularly that in ivory, which continued into the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century.[2] After fifty years of the increasing penetration of commodities, the elaboration of networks of exchange, the establishment of trading goods as means of exchange, and trade partially underpinning the power of ruling groups, contraction in the volume of trade was a prescription for conflict. The raids launched during the reign of Thulare (1790?-1820?) may thus be explicable as an attempt to enforce and extend control over a shrinking trade and to substitute accumulation through raiding for the declining advantages of a key position in trading. On the basis of existing research and evidence, however, this explanation cannot claim to be more than a tentative hypothesis.

---

1 Hedges, 'Trade and Politics', pp. 195-9, provides suggestive comparative material; Hunt 'Account', p. 278; B.H. Dicke, The Bush Speaks (Pietermaritzburg, 1937), pp. 21-2; N.J. Van Warmelo, The Bakoni of Mametsa (Pretoria, 1944), p. 48.

2 Hedges, 'Trade and Politics', pp. 12, 145-52.

PART TWO

The Ndwandwe and Sekwati's Rise to Power

The power of the Maroteng paramountcy did not survive the upheavals of the 1820s and 1830s in Southern Africa intact. Thulare's death in approximately 1820 unleashed conflicts amongst the royal agnates which split the polity after the death of Malekutu two years later. Two of Thulare's sons Matsebe and Makgeru (and possibly Malekutu) died at the hands of their brothers while a third, Makopole, concentrated on building a following amongst the Koni groups settled in the south east. Thulare's brother Motodi and his son Phetedi emerged from the disputes in control of the paramountcy but the polity they had captured remained divided, weakened and ill-equipped to withstand the full force of the difaqane in the Transvaal.[1]

The responsibility for the destruction of the Pedi polity has been almost universally laid at the door of the Ndebele under Mzilikazi. There are, however, strikingly divergent accounts of the events involved. The earliest was provided by the French missionaries Arbousset and Daumas on the basis of conversations with Pedi visiting Mshweshe's domain in the 1830s. In this version the Pedi armies twice defeated Mzilikazi's forces after which four years passed with no further contact. In the fifth year, the Ndebele launched two raids on the Pedi heartland sacking a principal town and seizing cattle and pressing population into service at the Ndebele capital. Bryant, whose work is a key source for the history of the Ndebele draws heavily on this work for his description of clashes between the Pedi and the Ndebele.[2]

---

1 Hunt, 'Account', pp. 284-5; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', pp. 97-8; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 331-3.

2 Arbousset, Narrative, pp. 185-6; A.T. Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal (London, 1929), p. 427.

In 1862, the B.M.S. missionary Alexander Merensky, although aware of Arbousset's version, published a significantly different account based on information collected in the Pedi heartland in 1861. According to this, Mzilikazi's forces appeared in the eastern Transvaal shortly after the death of Malekutu, clashed with and eventually defeated Makopole then advanced on the Pedi heartland destroying the defending army and decimating the royal house with the notable exception of Sekwati, a junior son of Thulare, who fled to the north. The next major published account was penned by the renegade German missionary, J. Winter. Although his version of events bears a strong resemblance to Merensky's, he does appear to have tapped new sources and there are key differences between his and previous accounts. The first is the suggestion that Phetedi's regiments as well as those of Makopole were involved in preliminary skirmishes with contingents from Mzilikazi's army before the main force crushed the Pedi army. The second is the assertion that these 'Zulus of Mosilikatse' then settled in the area for a year before moving to Pretoria. Hunt's widely cited depiction of these events draws heavily on Winter's.[1]

These sources have been heavily drawn on by historians, contending with the paucity of material on the early history of the Ndebele in the Transvaal. Omer-Cooper and Lye, principally on the basis of their reading of Bryant, suggest that Mzilikazi settled near the confluence of the Oliphants and Steelpoort Rivers and clashed unsuccessfully with the Pedi in 1823 soon after his arrival in the Transvaal. They believe that he then moved westwards whence four years later he delivered a crushing blow to the Pedi. Cobbing convincingly disputes this siting of Ndebele settlement in the north-eastern Transvaal and suggests that they followed a migration route well to the south to the south-central Transvaal. He follows Hunt however in

---

[1] Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p.333; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p.98; Hunt, 'Account', p. 285.

suggesting that the Ndebele army overwhelmed the Pedi in 1826 or 1827. Rasmussen attempts a still more radical revision of the orthodoxy. By drawing heavily on sources for Maroteng and Ndzundza Ndebele traditions, he constructs an elaborate edifice of interpretation which unfortunately stresses the evidence upon which it is based to breaking point. In brief, he suggests that in 1821 the Ndebele followed the course of the Steelpoort River to the site of the present Roos-Senekal where they encountered and defeated the Ndzundza. They then clashed with Makopole's Koni towards the east before proceeding north and devastating the Pedi army and settling in the Pedi heartland in 1822, where they remained for a year. In an attempt to reconcile this version and Pedi traditions of a series of clashes and Arbousset's depiction of two separate campaigns, Rasmussen draws on Bryant to suggest that Nqaba's Ngoni may have passed through the area and fought with the Pedi and even collaborated in Mzilikazi's attack.[1]

These versions all ultimately fail to explain or take account of the divergences in the sources. They also suffer from errors, implausibilities and inconsistencies. A key example of this is the way in which most allow their awareness of subsequent Ndebele military strength to colour their sense of earlier possibilities. Despite their estimates that Mzilikazi's original followers numbered in the region of three hundred, Omer-Cooper and Lye have no qualms about plotting a migration course veering to the north into the heartland of what, though divided, remained a powerfuly polity, while Rasmussen credits Mzilikazi with the power to follow a course past the Maroteng capital before returning to administer a massive defeat to the

---

[1] J.D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath (London, 1966), pp. 131-4; W.F. Lye 'The Ndebele Kingdom South of the Limpopo River', Journal of African History, X, 1 (1969), pp. 87-90; J.R. Cobbing, 'The Ndebele under the Khumalos, 1820-1896', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster, 1976, pp. 15-20; R.K. Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom , Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa (London, 1978) pp. 30-40.

Pedi army all within a year of his arrival in the Transvaal. Perhaps most question-begging of all, however, is the fact that Ndebele traditions are virtually silent on the subject of an encounter with the Pedi. Rasmussen while recognising that this contradicts the tendency of traditions to stress victories while suppressing defeats, hazards the explanation that victory over the Pedi was 'merely an unexceptional success in a string of major military confrontations'.[1] Yet, defeating the Pedi regiments, and especially at the time and in the fashion suggested by Rasmussen, could not have been regarded as other than an exceptional success.

It is possible on the basis of a closer investigation of the well-thumbed accounts, and of information gleaned from hitherto unused sources to present a substantially different account and to resolve some of the conundrums and contradictions outlined above. The first broad point is that traditions have a tendency to inter-twine separate historical threads into a single narrative strand and to elide separate events into a single drama. A number of groups were propelled north and west by the conflicts which surrounded the emergence of the Zulu Kingdom whose subsequent route and raids are as yet imperfectly plotted. Bryant suggests that Nqaba may have passed through the eastern Transvaal. Winter suggests that one contingent within Mzilikazi's army was commanded by 'Gunganyane' and after clashing with the Pedi veered off to the north east. Traditions of the Magakala recall a clash with 'Songandaba'. Both names could be corruptions of Zwangendaba. Sobhuza, the founder of the Swazi kingdom was certainly active in the region and 'Matsoba, an old kaffer of Sobhusa's' told Nachtigal

---

[1] Rasmussen, Migrant Kingdom, p. 36.

in 1870 that his leader had clashed with and been defeated by Makopole, before eventually defeating him. It thus seems probable that Pedi traditions have conflated a series of different groups and battles into one campaign and one army.[1]

Not only were the Ndebele only one of a number of groups which passed through the area but it also seems probable that they were not the group which had the decisive impact. Matsoba and Pedi informants provided Nachtigal with a version of events in 1870, in which the Ndwandwe under Zwide played the dominant role. The defeats which the Ndwandwe meted out to Sobhuza and Dingiswayo, their struggles with Tshaka and ultimate defeat by him in 1819, after which the army divided into three contingents under Shoshangane, Zwangendaba and Zwide which retreated northwards separately, are well remembered. The history of these groups over the next decade is rather less well-known, and that of Zwide and his followers is shrouded in mystery. Matsoba's account of it, however, provides important new insights. He recalled that Zwide trekked past Sobhuza who did not dare molest him and eventually in 1825(?) reached the heartland of the Pedi polity. Here he settled after having trounced the defending armies and killed the Maroteng rulers.[2] This version illuminates a number of other references and accounts. Merensky in 1861 was told that while Ndebele did not settle in the area, the 'kaffirs' (Nguni) under a Chief Sfete had settled on the Steelpoort. Traditions of the Magakala Pedi collected in the opening years of the twentieth century, although attributing overall responsibility for events to Mzilikazi, suggest that the leader of the army concerned was called 'Switi' and that he then settled near the Steelpoort

---

1 Bryant, Olden Times, p. 424; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p. 98; T.A., S.N.A. 74, 1325/07, History Magefe by C.A. Knothe, 15. 5. 07; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 382.

2 U.A. Tagebuch, A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 381-6; see also Sekhukhune's version of events, U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 42, 29. 1. 1862.

with his followers. Equally in the light of these sources, Bryant's suggestion that Zwide retreated until he reached the country of 'Tulwana (=Tulare), father of Sikwata, chief of the baBelu' which he conquered, looks considerably less fanciful than was previously supposed.[1]

After retreating with the remnants of a powerful army which was well versed in the military techniques spawned in Zululand, and accumulating followers during a progress through the south-eastern Transvaal of perhaps five years, Zwide is a more convincing candidate for the destroyer of Pedi power than Mzilikazi and his fledgeling band. The relative power of the Ndwandwe is also suggested by the fact that after spending approximately one year in the Pedi heartland during which Zwide died and was succeeded by his son Sikhunyana, they moved back towards Zululand and fought a pitched battle with the Zulu army north of the upper Pongola in June of 1826. While the battle itself was brief, observers estimated Ndwandwe numbers to be at least forty thousand and that sixty thousand head of cattle were captured by the victorious Zulu. Tshaka was reported jubilant after this success in the belief that he had destroyed 'the most powerful tribe with which he had ever contended'.[2]

The problem remains of why the Ndebele have so consistently been held responsible for defeating the Pedi and devastating the eastern Transvaal if the Ndwandwe were the principal culprits. Part of the explanation probably lies in the tendency of traditions to remember the powerful and forget the defeated even if they were once strong. The separate identity of the Ndwandwe was effectively extinguished in 1826 while the Ndebele prospered. It was thus on the basis of Mzilikazi's

---

1 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 333; T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07, History of Mafefa by C.A. Knothe, 15. 5. 07; Bryant, Olden Times, p.209.

2 Hedges, 'Trade and Politics', pp. 201-2; N. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, 1836, L. Herrman (ed.) (Cape Town, 1935); I, p. 124. See also, P. Bonner, 'Early State Formation among the Nguni: the Relevance of the Swazi Case', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, University of London, 25 January 1978.

subsequent career and power that he was retrospectively granted command of perhaps as many as five separate armies in Pedi traditions. This tendency was encouraged by the missionaries who recorded these traditions. The missionaries' received view of the history of the Transvaal was that the Ndebele had had a decisive and fundamental impact while they knew little of other groups who might have passed through the region. The Trekkers also partially based their claim to authority over the Transvaal on the fact that they were the legitimate heirs to the Ndebele state and thus had a vested interest in sustaining the largest possible definition of Mzilikazi's power.[1]

This revised version of events also enables some of the contradictions in previous accounts to be resolved. It also seems likely that Arbousset's Pedi informants provided an account so radically different from later traditions precisely because in describing events of the previous decade and in response to the form of the missionaries' questions, they restricted their narrative to relations between the Pedi and Ndebele. There probably were, therefore, two separate sets of encounters separated by roughly four years. In the first skirmishes, the Ndebele were comfortably defeated by Pedi regiments probably to the south of the Pedi heartland. In the second the Ndebele army launched raids on an area which had been conquered by the Ndwandwe army thus meeting limited resistance. This also explains the silence of Ndebele traditions on the subject of their encounters with the Pedi. There is little for them to celebrate in defeat, or in having picked at the bones of a carcass abandoned by the Ndwandwe.

---

[1] B.M.B., 1861, p. 307; L. Thompson, 'Co-operation and Conflict: The High Veld', Wilson and Thompson (eds.), Oxford History, I, p. 412.

Maroteng traditions also have a tendency to exaggerate the extent of social dislocation that followed defeat, projecting the particularly severe repercussions for that chiefdom on to all the societies of the area. Nonetheless, the consequences of conquest for the region were clearly profound. The Ndwandwe are remembered as having lived on their vast flocks and herds and by raiding for cattle and grain. Their activities ensured that production on the land was virtually abandoned in some areas and famine gripped the country after their departure. Those groups who remained in the region survived through hunting and gathering. Many descended the escarpment and hoed, hewed and hauled for lowveld societies in exchange for food. Others turned to cannibalism.[1]

The incidence of cannibalism provides traditions with a way of showing the dire consequences of the destruction of properly constituted authority. It also gave missionaries evidence which confirmed their suspicions that these societies teetered on the edge of barbarism. The heavy emphasis placed on cannibalism in the traditions and especially in the missionary accounts of them therefore requires cautious treatment. A close examination of the evidence suggests that it was restricted to a relatively few groups who were probably principally distinguished by the fact that they secured their subsistence almost exclusively through raiding, and were thus seen as living on their fellows.[2]

Not all chiefdoms were as comprehensively crushed as the Maroteng. The paucity of evidence makes it difficult to construct a regional picture of the effects of invasion and conquest. A number of Tau (notably the Masemola), Matlala and other chiefdoms to the west of the Leolu weathered the storm more or less intact as did the Magakala and Mphaphlele sheltered

---

1 Winter, 'Ra'lolo', p. 98; T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07, History Mafefe by C.A. Knothe; U.A., Tagebuch, A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 859, 9. 11. 1869.

2 Winter, 'Ra'lolo', pp. 98-9; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 333-4; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 101-21; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 117-8.

by their position north of the Oliphants River. However, the Koni and eastern Sotho groups settled to the south-east bore the brunt of the intruding armies, and their domain was partially depopulated. Nonetheless, some groups avoided extinction, others were reconstituted andyet others incorporated into new political communities. To the south-west, the Ndzundza Ndebele and Kopa chiefdoms while buffeted and battered were re-established.[1] Throughout the region, however, if in varying degree, a profound rupture in relationships of power and authority had taken place.

The defeat of the Maroteng paramountcy equally did not put an end to all resistance. The Tau suffered heavily in initial attempts to eject the invaders. Magakala traditions recall that they launched counter-attacks against the Ndwandwe and they claim responsibility for the death of Zwide and the departure of his followers. These latter claims are probably rather inflated. Bryant's alternative version of these events is that Zwide was stricken by an illness inflicted upon him by the Lobedu queen and thus decided to leave the area. As Mujaji was widely reputed in the eastern Transvaal to control the movement of disease, particularly smallpox, this tradition suggests that the Ndwandwe may have decided to move because they were suffering from this, or from some other affliction.[2] The societies which remained and surfaced in the wake of the Ndwandwe departure had to struggle to survive in a difficult and hostile environment. Production had been comprehensively disrupted, and there was an ever present threat of attack by Ndebele and other external raiders whose demand for and seizure of captives, cattle and grain compounded the difficulties of recovery. This

---

1 Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 45-7; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p.334; T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07, History Mafefe by C.A. Knothe, 15. 5. 07; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 955-6.

2 Ibid.; Bryant, Olden Times, pp. 210-12.

economic and political insecurity in the absence of over-arching forms of authority, encouraged rapidly changing patterns of alliance and conflict and a high level of violence. The chiefdoms which had survived intact competed for followers and for control of key resources with the new foci of power which emerged from the debris of the destroyed political system, and both had to contend with 'cannibals' whose raiding threatened the lives and subsistence of those attempting to revive production on the land.[1]

The most powerful of the surviving chiefdoms were the Mphaphlele and Magakala north of the Oliphants. The Masemola appear to have suffered heavily in a later, probably Ndebele raid, but retained some control west of the Leolu. In the core of the old Pedi heartland, a number of surviving Maroteng royals retained and developed followings. The most notable of these were Legolane, a daughter of Thulare; Mojalodi, a son of the deceased Phetedi; Kgabe, son of the murdered Makgeru; and Seboni, who may have been a full brother to Sekwati, but who was definitely a son of Thulare. Kgabe was the most successful of these, finally incorporating both Seboni and Mojalodi and their followers. Lekgolane suffered defeat at the hands of a 'cannibal' band, and was forced to seek refuge with the Magakala. The most powerful figure to emerge in this period, however, was a commoner - Marangrang - who initially built his following in the south-east from the remnants of Koni chiefdoms, subsequently successfully challenged the power of the Magakala and Mphaphlele and partially incorporated Kgabe and his adherents. He also turned his attention, with partial success, to extinguishing the raiding bands in the area.[2]

A number of groups were propelled northwards by the turmoil in the Pedi heartland. The most successful of these was led by Sekwati, a junior son of Thulare, who after having witnessed Zwide's destruction of Maroteng

---

[1] Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 45-7; Winter, 'Ra'lolo', pp. 98-9; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 334-5; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 594-5, 25. 5. 1869; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 191-2.

[2] Ibid.

power fled across the Oliphants River with some of the remnants of the chiefdom. The career of this group in the following years is far from clear, but Maroteng and other traditions suggest that they survived and prospered through allying with the strong and attacking the weak. The traditions of the Tlokwa, settled north of modern Pietersburg, recall that Sekwati settled in their area for some time, participated with them in raids on their neighbours and assisted them to evade Ndebele attack and exaction by retreating into the Woodbush. The traditions of the Hanawa settled near the Blouberg and the Lobedu settled east of the Escarpment, recall raids by Sekwati in this period, and there is also some evidence that he may have crossed the Limpopo. Tlokwa and Maroteng traditions also recall that Sekwati collaborated with a 'white man' called Kadisha. This was almost certainly Doris Buys, the mixed-blood son of the frontiersman Coenraad de Buys, also known by the Pedi as Motanapitsi, the Zebra. Sekwati's successes were, however, partially counterbalanced by clashes with the Ndebele army in which he lost much of the stock he had accumulated. Finally, this band retraced its steps southward to the Oliphants River.[1]

Nactigal's informants suggested that Sekwati returned to his homeland two years after the departure of the Ndwandwe. As the Ndwandwe reached their final battle ground in mid-1826 it is likely that they left the Steelpoort River at the latest in early 1826 and thus that Sekwati returned to the area in or by 1828. While Sekwati had probably enlarged his following and swelled his herds during his years to the north, traditions make clear that

---

[1] J.A. Winter, 'The History of Sekwati', South African Journal of Science, IX (1912), pp. 329-30; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p.333; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 42, 29. 1. 1862; Krige, 'Traditional Origins', pp. 333, 351-2, 353-4; Ramaila, Setlogo, p. 51; Hunt, 'Account', p. 287. (I am indebted for this identification of Doris Buys to R. Wagner.)

he was in no position to impose his authority by sheer weight of numbers or simply by virtue of his wealth. His success appears to have owed a good deal to his already proven capacity to forge advantageous alliances and to exploit key political cleavages. Indeed, his homecoming was facilitated, perhaps even encouraged by chiefdoms in the region of the Oliphants River who viewed him as a potential ally against the growing power of Marangrang and the attacks of the various raiding bands. Sekwati settled at Phiring near the remaining Masemola whose chief Mabowe was intent on recouping his own position and therefore welcomed the chance to collaborate with a relatively powerful royal.[1]

Sekwati initially made a show of acknowledging Marangrang's supremacy but this did not prevent him from conspiring against the 'Koni' leader. Marangrang finally met his death during an attack on the Mphaphlele but Sekwati took this opportunity to launch an attack on the 'Koni' settlements and captured their cattle. Kgabe now assumed Marangrang's mantle but was finally defeated by Sekwati and subsequently died in battle. His following, which included his younger brother Kabu, Phetedi's son Mojalodi and Thulare's son Seboni, now swelled the ranks of Sekwati's subjects which strengthened the claim of his chiefdom to be the legitimate successor to the previous Maroteng paramountcy.[2] By 1837, when Sekwati met the Trichardt trek on the bank of the Oliphants River he was clearly regarded as paramount in the region.[3]

Sekwati did not achieve a hegemonic position by dint of diplomacy alone. His growing power was partly based on his success in expanding the basis of his support relatively rapidly. One method he adopted to do so was to

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 383; Winter, 'Sekwati', p. 330; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 334-6; Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 46-9.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 48-9; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 336-7.

attack the remaining 'cannibal' bands, and to take their members captive. He distributed cattle to them and then allocated them to the various subordinate groups within his chiefdom thus both increasing its military and productive capacity and creating a cross-cutting network of relationships of clientage which buttressed his own position as ruler.[1]

The difaqane and its aftermath north of the Vaal caused a large-scale and widespread movement of displaced and often dispossessed persons and communities. Even after the departure of the Ndebele from the Transvaal in 1837, the turmoil in southern Mozambique, Swazi raids on the societies of the lowveld and Escarpment, and Trekker attacks and exactions, all served to create movements of refugees into the relative security of the new Pedi heartland. This flow of refugees provided the Maroteng chiefdom with a rich source for new recruits and one that Sekwati was particularly well placed to benefit from once he had established a degree of local hegemony. Individuals or small groups wishing to settle in the area, often bereft of key social and economic resources like cattle, and without wider networks of kinship and alliance, could be bound in relationships of close dependence on the paramount by loans of cattle and even direct grants of wives. Larger and wealthier groups probably provided one source of tribute to the paramountcy, but as importantly, they could be directed to areas where - at least initially - their lack of local sources of support allowed the paramount to employ them to balance the power of their longer-established neighbours.[2]

Also crucial to the progress of the Maroteng chiefdom to ascendancy was that while Sekwati husbanded his resources, his principal rivals gambled their power in major military confrontations. As we have seen,

---

1 B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 21. 9. 1861; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 95, 98-9.

2 Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 95-6, 213; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 18. 8. 1865; see also ch. 2 for further discussion of these points.

Marangrang died during an attack on the Mphaphlele chiefdom. The Mphaphlale and Magakala chiefdoms were also locked in competition for control over the Oliphants River region. Sekwati appears to have formed an alliance with Mphaphlele directed against both Marangrang and Magakala, but it was the Mphaphlele who bore the brunt of the fighting. The growing power of the Magakala, however, suffered a profound reversal during a disastrous attack on a Transvaal Ndebele group, the Maraba, in which the Magakala chief - Legadimene - died. In the aftermath of these battles while the other main contenders for regional hegemony counted their losses, Sekwati's relative power had grown.[1]

The fact that the Maroteng achieved a position of hegemony by these means and in these circumstances had important implications for the future and nature of the polity which emerged. Sekwati was able to bring his major rivals and most powerful allies to accept him as the legitimate heir to the paramountcy. His success was not based on the outright conquest of his previous homeland or on destroying the foci of power which remained and emerged in the aftermath of the difaqane. He was not in a position to extinguish the local power of subordinate chiefdoms or to erase the possibility that in time they would contest his authority or combine against his rule. Sekwati achieved power by exploiting and incorporating and partially refashioning existing relationships and forms of power. He was in no position to radically restructure the relationships of power in the region by creating cross-cutting institutions, like standing regiments, under direct Maroteng control or to otherwise risk confrontation with recent rivals and competitors jealous of their remaining independence. Sekwati, having partially succeeded by means of diplomacy, found that he had also to rule by it, and a fundamental tension remained within the political system.[2]

---

[1] T.A., S.N.A., 74, 1325/07, History Mafefe by C.A. Knothe, 15.5.07.

[2] B.M.B., 1861, p. 305; see also ch. 2.

The polity which emerged in this period represented in many senses a new political system shaped by the changed and particular context of the post-difaqane Transvaal. The balance of power in the area, however, meant that the new rulers were not in a position to adopt or enforce the new institutions and forms of control which emerged during the difaqane and which played a key role in shaping, for example, the nature of the Zulu, Swazi and Ndebele kingdoms. The previous Pedi polity in which regiments had remained under the control of subordinate chiefdoms, which had incorporated and tolerated a variety of forms of local power, and which had stressed the affinal links between the Maroteng and their subject chiefdoms, provided a more suitable model. Its existence and previous authority along with the fact that Sekwati and others had been members of its ruling lineage, provided a crucial, if somewhat ambivalent, source of legitimacy to the new paramountcy. One of the most important consequences of this fact was that the relationships of rank and status which had existed in the former polity provided one set of terms in which argument about the new order was to be conducted.[1]

Not only did the Maroteng have to keep a weather eye on local rivals but they and their subjects lived under the shadow of Zulu power and under threat from the ever-active regiments of their principal competitor for regional power, the Swazi kingdom. In contrast to the new Pedi polity, the Swazi kingdom's development was close to that of the ideal-typical conquest state, in which initially, problems of legitimating rule and institutionalising the extraction of surplus, take a back seat to the forcible incorporation and subordination of subject populations and the extraction of surplus through raids or the threat of them. These divergent paths of development meant that the heartland of the Pedi

---

[1] Ibid.; also ch. 4, part 1.

polity appeared a relative haven but the expanding sphere covered by Swazi raids ensured that the recovery of the societies of the eastern Transvaal from the traumas of the 1820s was slow. The Koni, Pai, Pulana and Kutswe groups settled in the region between the core area of the Pedi polity and the heartland of the Swazi kingdom remained comparatively poor, fragmented and scattered well into the 1860s. Many lived near shelter sites, often fortified caves, in almost constant fear of raids and had been stripped of, or had abandoned attempts to keep, stock. The expansion of trade in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the impact of Shoshangane and others on southern Mozambique stimulated a movement of Tsonga groups west into the lowveld and onto the Escarpment, and these communities also suffered heavily from Swazi raids.[1] In later years, however, these areas and communities were to become a principal focus of the competing claims to power and authority of the Pedi polity on the Swazi kingdom and the South African Republic.

The nature and course of the difaqane was partially determined by the development and adoption of new and more destructive offensive military tactics and weapons by the Ndwandwe, Zulu and others. Maroteng and Tau traditions, for example, remember the battles with the Ndwandwe as having been marked by a thitherto unknown level of destruction and death. Part of the legacy of this experience and probably also of subsequent military encounters was that Sekwati went to considerable lengths to avoid risking confrontations with attacking armies in the open. The Maroteng and their subordinates rather adopted the tactic of constructing

---

[1] P. Bonner, 'The rise, consolidation and disintegration of Dhlamini power in Swaziland between 1820 and 1889', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1977, pp. 34-42, 47; Bonner describes this as the era of 'primitive accumulation'; T.A., S.N.1, 105/79, Report of the Landdros of Lydenburg, 31. 5. 1879, and S.N.1, 108/79, Report by Nelmapius, 4. 5. 1879; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 233-45.

and sheltering within fortified strongholds which elaborated natural defences. Sekwati's capital Phiring, for example, was a hill strongly fortified by stone-walling; attacking armies were therefore forced to risk storming fortifications which allowed little scope for military tactics evolved in the context of set-piece battles and entailed heavy casualties among the assailants. The alternative was siege, which created problems of sustaining armies in the field for long periods of time. By the end of the difaqane, new offensive military tactics had to some extent been countered by the Pedi and others with new defensive tactics.[1]

The first major Swazi raid on the Pedi heartland took place some ten years after Sekwati's return from exile which would place it in approximately 1838. Sent by the Swazi regent Somcuba and guided by the Pedi renegade Tshamaloma, the Swazi army penetrated as far as Phiring. A night attack launched by the Swazi was, however, repulsed with relative ease and with limited loss of life or stock. In 1851 a Zulu army despatched by Mpande massed before Phiring and twice attempted to storm it before retreating in some disarray. By this time, the Pedi had acquired a number of guns and the difficulties of attacking Phiring were compounded by the fact that assailants had now to penetrate a deadly deluge of spears and rocks laced with bullets. The great strength of guns was in defence and it was an advantage which in time the Pedi regiments learnt to exploit to the full. The Maroteng were, however, anxious to avoid a second encounter with the Zulu army. Sekwati despatched gifts of ostrich feathers to Mpande and may have continued to pay a regular, if token, tribute and to send gifts of items highly valued by the Zulu.[2]

---

[1] Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 45-6; Winter, 'Sekwati', pp. 330-1; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 337-9, 341-2.

[2] Ibid.; Bryant, Olden Times, 209; C.L. Harries, The Laws and Customs of the Bapedi and Cognate Tribes of the Transvaal (Johannesburg, 1929), p. 79.

PART THREE

The Trekkers

In 1845 a new dimension was added to the balance and relationships of power in the eastern Transvaal by the establishment of a Trekker community centred on the village of Ohrigstad which was founded east of the Steelpoort River. The first Trekkers to settle in the area were the followers of A.H. Potgieter, who moved from Mooi River in the south-western Transvaal. They were joined, however, by Trekkers from Natal who, in the main, looked to the leadership of J.J. Burghers, and totalled some 300 families. The principal attraction of the eastern Transvaal was its proximity to ports under Portuguese rather than British control and the abundance of game - particularly elephants - in the lowveld. Partly on the basis of advice received by Potgieter from J.A. Smellekamp, the agent of a Dutch merchant-house, it was hoped that a flourishing trade would be established with Delagoa Bay and that commercial and cultural links with Holland would be forged.[1]

The core area of Trekker settlement was thus the region which had suffered most and had been partially - although by no means completely - depopulated during the difaqane. It appears that Sekwati and chiefdoms to the south, notably the Kopa under Boleu and the Ndzundza Ndebele ruled by Mabhogo, initially extended a cautious welcome to the Trekkers. This probably stemmed from a combination of apprehension that the mobility and fire power which had been used to such good effect against the Ndebele

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 3-8; A.P. Van der Merwe, 'Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1941, p. 24; F.J. Potgieter, 'Die Vestiging van die Blanke in Transvaal (1837-86) met Spesiale Verwysing na die Verhoudinge Tussen die Mens en die Omgewing', Archives Year Book, 21, II (1958), p. 39.

might be employed against them and the hope that the Trekker presence would restrain Swazi, Zulu and Gaza Nguni from launching attacks on the region. The presence in Potgieter's entourage of Doris Buys, who had collaborated with Sekwati during his period of exile to the north, probably also helped the establishment of an initially co-operative relationship between the Trekker leader and the Maroteng paramount.[1]

The Ohrigstad settlement was riven with conflict from the beginning. The principal source and focus of the disputes were the competing claims to overall power and authority of A.H. Potgieter and an elective Volksraad. The division of opinion broadly corresponded to the division between Potgieter's established adherents and the Natal Trekkers who tended to follow the lead of J.J. Burghers. A number of issues were at stake in these conflicts. One was the degree of control that Potgieter established over both trade and tribute. Another was the extent to which the vision held by some of the settlers of a stable community based on the development of pastoral and agricultural production, as well as hunting, and linked by firm cultural and commercial links with the outside world, was endangered by the hunting and raiding propensities of Potgieter's party.[2] The problem of securing rights to the land upon which the community had settled also played a significant role in these disputes.

Despite the claims made by some of the Trekkers, and reproduced by their latter-day historians, that their defeat of Mzilikazi's regiments made them heirs to Ndebele power and therefore to rights to the land throughout the Transvaal, the Ohrigstad settlers were clearly far from

---

1 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 338-40; J.A. Agar-Hamilton, The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers, 1836-1858 (Cape Town, 1928), pp. 57 and 66; R. Wagner kindly allowed me to consult a draft chapter, 'Doris Buys and the Colony of Ohrigstad', from his forthcoming thesis (London), on the Buys family.

2 P. Bonner, 'The relations between internal and external politics in Swaziland and the eastern Transvaal in the mid-nineteenth century', I.C.S., S.A., Seminar, 2, 1970, pp. 38-9; Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy, 59, pp. 69-70; Van der Merwe, 'Voorgeskiedenis', pp. 36-42, 56-9.

secure in this conviction. A.H. Potgieter sought to legitimize the settlement and to ensure and enhance his leadership and control over the community by negotiating an agreement with Sekwati. The precise terms of this agreement which was concluded in 1845 are unfortunately not known. The claim made by Potgieter was that it made over all rights to the land to the Trekkers through his agency. Precisely which area of land was involved was never specified. The document was, however, described as a vredens tractaat (peace treaty) and its seems probable that the Maroteng viewed it in a substantially different light to the Trekkers.[1]

The likelihood is that the policy of the Maroteng in this instance was not dissimilar to that which they adopted towards other groups which sought to settle within their area of hegemony; the Maroteng allocated these groups land upon which to settle, but continued to consider that they held ultimate rights to the land on behalf of their subjects. This suggestion is borne out by the comments that Sekwati made to Doris Buys who had been despatched by the Volksraad faction to offer an exchange of cattle against transfer of the land to them. Sekwati's response was that if he bartered one of his children then he would no longer be his master and if he bartered the land he would no longer be master of his people. Therefore, if they wanted to barter the land that he had already granted he would rather leave the area than agree.[2] Certainly by the time that evidence of Pedi opinion is available from other than Trekker sources, it was that Sekwati had never sold farms or land to the Boers and that his answer to such requests had always been 'live in peace with my people but I will not sell land'.[3] It is thus possible to suggest that Sekwati's view of the peace treaty was that in exchange for ceding usufructuary

---

1 S.A.A.R., Transvaal, 1, E.V.R., 1, pp. 16-19, Ands, Orieg Stad den 20 Augs. 1845.

2 S.A.A.R., Transvaal, 1, E.V.R., 1, pp. 66-7, A. Ohrigstad, den 15 Mey 1846.

3 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 339.

rights to land he gained welcome potential allies against external threats and in entrenching his own authority over internal and local rivals. Perhaps most crucial of all, however, was the fact that the Maroteng at this stage were in no position to dictate to the Trekkers where they could, or could not, settle.

The Volksraad party, however, intent on reducing their dependence on Potgieter, did not abandon their attempts to find an alternative basis to the settlement's rights to land. In the face of Sekwati's obduracy, the possibility of exploiting the claims of the Swazi King Mswati to control much of the north-eastern Transvaal became increasingly tempting. Mswati, intent on entrenching his own authority and seeking support against the Zulu, welcomed the arrival of the Trekkers and the possibility of reaching an agreement. In July of 1846 a treaty was concluded which ceded to the Boers all the territory bounded by the Oliphants River in the north and the Crocodile and Elands Rivers to the south. Thus, notionally, a vast expanse of land was made over to the Trekkers including the new and old heartlands of the Pedi polity and the domains of the Ndzundza Ndebele, the Kopa and the various Koni and Eastern Sotho groups.[1]

The validity of this agreement has been the subject of prolonged debate, most importantly and most heatedly in the years immediately preceding the annexation of the South African Republic in 1877. Its supporters advance the improbable claim that the Swazi King was entitled to sell land on which his subjects were settled, but even this justification fails to legitimize the sale of the heartland of the clearly independent Pedi polity. In 1879,

---

[1] Bonner, 'Internal and external politics', pp. 38-40, and H.S. Pretorius and D.W. Kruger, Voortrekker Argiefstukke, (Pretoria, 1937), pp. 233-5; R 117/46, Copy of Purchase Agreement, 25. 7. 1846.

C. Jeppe, presumably on the basis of information received from B.M.S. missionaries, summed up the argument and stated the obvious conclusion in the admirably pithy comment, 'the Amaswazies did sell the land, but it is also evident that they had no right to do so'.[1] This was certainly the view taken by the Pedi.

Much of the literature that touches on this debate provides a clear warning that it is possible in this area of relationships between African and Boer society to become trapped in a maze of pseudo-legal arguments. Part of the problem stems from the fact that there was no uniform legal system or notion of property to which all the parties subscribed. There existed therefore not only contradictory agreements but also substantively distinct views of the nature of the rights they conferred. The Swazi rulers ceded land beyond the heartland of their kingdom. They exercised a loose, if occasionally dramatic, hegemony over some of the population settled on this land. The Maroteng ceded rights of occupation but clearly did not believe that they had surrendered ultimate control. The Trekkers believed that the land had been transformed into their property and set about distributing it as private property amongst the members of their community.[2] Which view would ultimately triumph would be determined by the ability of those who held it to enforce it on those who did not. The stage was set for conflict.

While these competing interpretations and agreements gave hostages to the future, Trekker raids on, and demands for labour and other forms of tribute from African societies in the region of settlement gave more immediate cause for conflict. These sources of dispute cannot, however,

---

[1] T.A., S.N. 5, unnumbered, unsigned document, headed 'Sekukuni', but in the handwriting of C. Jeppe, ?1879; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 5, 279-92.

[2] See ch. 2 and ch. 6, part 1.

be clearly separated. Although the effective basis of Trekker demands was the superior coercive capacity and reputation which their possession of horses and guns afforded them, Trekker exactions were often justified in terms of their claims to ownership of the land.[1]

Wagner has convincingly argued that hunting was the dominant branch of Trekker production in the early stages of settlement in this area. There is, however, also ample evidence to sustain the contention that the boundary between a hunting and raiding party was tenuous and often crossed. A key product of the hunt, and to an extent the raid, was ivory. The demand for this and other products of the hunt was central to the continued ability of the community to purchase a range of socially necessary commodities. Vital amongst these were arms and ammunition but a range of other goods were also in demand.[2] These Trekkers were not the peripatetic subsistence-oriented pastoralists of popular account. They were the products of a society in the Cape which had been partially formed under the dominance of merchant capital. Their early history in the Transvaal was shaped by their attempts to forge independent links with the world economy, not to escape from it. The product of the hunt was vital to the attempt to establish a viable trade with Delagoa Bay; it also provided meat for consumption and for the exchange of grain produced by African societies.[3]

The emphasis on hunting did not, however, mean that agriculture and pastoralism were redundant or that the intention to establish and extend

---

1 B.M.B., 1860, p. 341; T.A., L 19, Verslag C. Potgieter, 26, 11. 1859.

2 Wagner, 'Doris Buys'; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 338-40; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 1, E.V.R., 1, pp. 22-3, Ohrig Stad, 26.9.45; D.W. Kruger, 'Die Weg na die See', Archives Year Book, 1, 1 (1938), pp. 92-4; Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, pp. 242-5; R 118f/46, 'Vendurol Omtrent Makeeps Goederen', 7. 10. 1846.

3 Ibid.; R. Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg, Some notes on the dynamics of a hunting frontier', I.C.S., S.A. Seminar, vol. 6, 1974; B.M.B., 1867, p. 252.

their importance was absent. By 1846, wheat, maize and a variety of beans were under cultivation in the environs of Ohrigstad. The area, in fact, became renowned for the high quality of wheat it was capable of producing. The bushveld, however, harboured diseases which made it ill-suited to either stock-keeping or human habitation on a year-round basis. The Ohrigstad settlers fell victim to malaria and their herds and flocks, already depleted during the trek, were further reduced by stock disease. The hopes of the Trekkers were also dashed, and large numbers of oxen lost, through their failure to find a tsetse-fly-free route to the coast. This reverse, combined with the distance from alternative - mainly Natal - markets, and the high cost of transport, ensured that the thriving trade anticipated did not materialise.[1]

In 1848, in order to escape this disease and conflict-ridden community and in response to the rapid retreat of elephant herds in the face of intensified hunting, Potgieter and his followers moved north and founded the town of Schoemansdal. This weakened the community still further and also led to the eastern Transvaal being increasingly eclipsed as a focus of the ivory hunting and trade by the Zoutpansberg. Ohrigstad and its environs were abandoned by many of those who remained. Some left the district altogether; others moved to the higher lying lands to the south. The town of Lydenburg, established in 1849, became the new centre of the community and came to give its name to the district.[2]

The Trekkers, on their arrival in the Transvaal, had suffered from what they perceived to be an acute labour shortage. Slavery, clientage and

---

[1] Potgieter, 'Vestiging', pp. 39-41, 43; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 338-40; A. Aylward, The Transvaal of Today (Edinburgh, 1878), pp. 14-15, 123.

[2] Ibid.; Van der Merwe, 'Voorgeskiedenis', pp. 68-9; J.B. de Vaal, 'Die Rol van João Albasini in die Geskiedenis van die Transvaal', Archives Year Book, 16, 1 (1953), p. 20; Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg', p.32.

indenture had created a pool of labour at the disposal of farmers in the Cape Colony and this supply of labour was supplemented by migrant labour from southern Nguni societies. No equivalent supply was available to the Ohrigstad settlers. Many of those who joined the trek from the eastern Cape had probably previously experienced difficulty in gaining and retaining labour and many more lost servants and clients during the course of their travels. African societies in the eastern Transvaal while battered by the difaqane and its aftermath, retained access to and control of the means of production. While some were prepared to undertake periods of labour in exchange for cattle and commodities, as will be explored later, it was only arms and ammunition which were likely to attract anything resembling an adequate supply. These commodities were, however, both in short supply to the settlers and relatively expensive. Moreover, the partial monopoly of these goods was one important basis of their power. The alternatives open to these settlers were thus either to break with their past and restructure the nature of their own society by relying on family labour, or to resort to coercing a supply of labour from surrounding African societies. The latter course was the preferred option, but throughout the first three decades of settlement, the possibility and the reality of the use of family labour emerges from petitions and complaints about the damaging effects of labour shortages.[1]

Labour coercion took a number of forms. Hunting parties demanded tribute labour from chiefdoms over whose land they hunted or in the areas from which they set out. Access to even a limited share of the product of

---

[1] P. Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1858-1899', 2 vols. unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of South Africa, 1954, 1, pp. 185-93; H. Gilliomee, 'The South African frontier: stages in development', unpub. seminar paper, pp. 5-7; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, 651-7; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, Bylaag 49/1851, Copy of letter sent to Heer Schutte Hoyman, 4. 12. 1851; T. Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, (ed., G.P.J. Trümpelmann), (Cape Town, 1957), p.32; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 1, E.V.R. 1, Ohrigstad, 16.3.47.

the hunts probably ensured that levels of coercion were, in the main, not high. The evidence suggests that directly coerced and unpaid, often female, labour was most widely used to meet seasonal and short-term demands for agricultural labour. Thus the prohibition placed by the Volksraad in 1851 on using unpaid labour for longer than fourteen days may have partially reflected practice. Veldcornets and other local officials and notables also played a key role in the supply of contract labour. These were usually males who would work for notionally three- or twelve-month contracts, mainly as herders in exchange for hoes, blankets and, for the longer contracts, heifers. While these rewards were sufficient to attract some voluntary labour, pressure was brought to bear on rulers of chiefdoms and heads of settlements to ensure that the demands for this form of labour were met and that contracted workers did not abscond. Chiefs and others who failed to meet these obligations found themselves sternly and even violently dealt with: increased demands for other forms of tribute, and whippings, featured amongst the principal sanctions employed.[1] In part, the fact that during the early period of settlement in the Transvaal the Trekkers were not in a position to extract labour or tribute on a systematic basis led to high levels of sporadic coercion, coupled with acts of direct personal violence such as whipping being employed to symbolise and entrench Trekker power and authority.

Labour secured by these various means was neither in sufficient numbers nor equipped with appropriate skills to satisfy Trekker needs. The available evidence suggests that in the eastern Transvaal inboekselings

---

[1] Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 185-93; S.T. Van der Horst, Native Labour in South Africa (Oxford, 1942), p. 56; D. Livingstone, Missionary Travels and Researches (London, 1857), pp. 29-31; F.A. Van Jaarsveld, 'Die Veldkornet en sy Aandeel in die Opbou van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek', Archives Year Book, 12, 1 (1950), pp. 212-3; T.A., L.L.1, Report of Veldcornet Van Niekerk, April-December, 1861; L. 19, Landdros of Lydenburg, 8.3.1861 and 12.3.1861; S.S. 139, Supp. Stukke 103/71, Commisie voor Kafferzaken, statement of David, 9.10.1871. The evidence to this commission is probably the richest single source on the pattern of relationships between Boer and African society over the previous thirty years in the central and western Transvaal. It has, however, been largely ignored or overlooked by historians.

(children - notionally orphans - indentured to their masters until adulthood, the age of twenty-one in the case of females and twenty-five in the case of males) played a vital role in the Boer labour force. The form of indenture derived in part from the apprenticeship laws promulgated in the Cape Colony in 1775 and 1812 which allowed for the indenturing of Khoikhoi and slave children. The social reality which had informed these laws was that by the end of the eighteenth century, the informal indenturing of Khoikhoi children was widespread, and captives - particularly those taken by commandos launched to exterminate 'bushmen' - were also indentured. The various military encounters with African societies during the course of the Trek provided Boers with the opportunity to take children captive. There is, for example, detailed evidence available on the seizure of children in the wake of the Trekker defeat of the Zulu in Natal. On their arrival in the Transvaal, Boers continued to take children in raids, demanded them as tribute, and secured them through exchange.[1]

While the difficulties the Boers experienced in securing labour ensured that these inboekselings laboured in a wide variety of capacities, their most important contribution appears to have been in meeting the Boer household's requirements for domestic labour and through their acquisition of the variety of skills essential to the Boer economy. If taken sufficiently young, these children became distanced culturally as well as physically from their societies of origin. Partially socialised within the Boer household or under the care of adult inboekselings and clients, they both absorbed and contributed to the under class culture

---

[1] For a cross-section of the evidence for these points (following the order in which they are made) see, S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, Bylaag 49/1851, Copy of a letter sent to Heer Schutte Hoyman, 4.12.1851; B.M.B., 1860, 342; B.M.B., 1861, 254; Gilliomee, 'Frontier', pp. 6-8; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 651-3; Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, R119/47, Report by Grobler 14.5.1847; Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 340; De Vaal, 'Albasini', p. 125; see also, W. Kistner, 'The anti-slavery agitation against the Transvaal Republic', Archives Year Book, 15, II (1952), pp. 193-278; and S. Trapido, 'Aspects in the transition from slavery to serfdom: the South African Republic, 1842-1902, I.C.S., S.A. seminar vol. 6, pp. 24-6, and ch. 6, part 2.

which existed within Boer-dominated society. As these children grew up, they learned the various skills required of them. Ideally, they would become bound to Boer society by ties of culture, family and skill. Probably most important of all was that they could be entrusted with firearms and placed in supervisory positions over herders and hunting and trading expeditions.[1]

While, as later chapters will show, the ideal of such an evolution from indentured child to contented client found highly imperfect expression in the actual course and content of relationships, it seems that Boer settlers in the eastern Transvaal saw, in the incorporation of children, the simplest and fastest way to rebuild and extend the remnants of the Khoikhoi and Coloured labour force which, in the Cape, had provided 'cooks, herders, and labourers, wagon drivers, and interpreters'. These had also been 'fine shots and horsemen' who had 'hunted for their masters and were ... sent as soldiers on commando against the San and Xhosa'.[2]

The Ohrigstad settlers' demands for labour and other forms of tribute (including ivory, cattle and children) resulted in a number of groups coming to rue the Trekkers' arrival in the region. These increasingly sought to evade and resist their exactions. The groups who were most pressed were those settled to the south of the Steelpoort River, and the Kopa under Boleu and the Ndzundza Ndebele under Mabhogo emerged as two key foci of resistance. Their capacity to challenge Trekker power was partially enhanced by their acquisition of firearms in contravention of Trekker decrees. It was commented of Boleu that in consequence of possessing guns he no longer regarded himself as a 'kaffer', but as a 'boer'. In 1848, the Kopa were attacked and stripped of twenty-four guns and fifty-six cattle.[3]

---

[1] Ibid.; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, Bylaag 15, 1851, V.R. 164/51, Petition, Schoeman and 17 others, 1.5.1851; T.A., L 8, 13/56, Petition, Potgieter and 10 others, 20.5.1856; L 1, Volksraad Notule, 12.3.1857.

[2] M. Wilson, 'Co-operation and conflict: the Eastern Cape frontier', Wilson and Thompson (eds.) Oxford History, 1, p. 246; and also, ch. 6, part 2.

[3] S.A.A.R., Transvaal 1, E.V.R.1, pp. 125-6, Ohrieg 7.10.1848; Ibid. 22/48, V.R. 56/48 Nel, 1.10.1848; ibid., Bylaag 28, 1848, Report of Nel, de Beer and Joubert, n.d.

Probably as important as the acquisition of guns in the increasing willingness and ability of these societies to resist Boer demands, however, was the extent to which the settler community was weakened by the movement of Potgieter to the north and the steady drift of families to the south or entirely out of the region. The initial attempts at a relatively concentrated settlement pattern had to be abandoned, and dispersed settlement increased the military vulnerability and anxiety of the settlers. Equally, the activities of the Trekkers encouraged new movements of refugees into the domains of the more powerful chiefdoms where levels of exaction were lower. As a result, these polities were strengthened and emerged as alternative foci of power to the Trekkers. By the early 1850s, the balance of power had swung so far that the settlers were convinced that drastic measures were required to restore their control over the region.[1]

The initially close and co-operative relationship established between Sekwati and the Trekker leaders, particularly Potgieter, which was reflected in the mounting of joint hunts and raids, did not survive. A joint raid launched against the Kgatla under Moletse in the Zoutpansberg in 1847, ended in conflict between the commando led by Potgieter and the Pedi regiments, over the division of the spoils. Potgieter had taken the precaution of holding Sekwati hostage to ensure the compliance of his subjects, and the Pedi regiments found that they had to content themselves with a derisory share of the booty. Their disillusionment with the Trekker community was increased by demands for tribute, and while Sekwati was initially prepared to meet Potgieter's demands for ivory and cattle, he resisted demands for children and increasingly sought to evade Trekker exactions.[2]

---

1 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 356; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 95-6; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 18.8.1865; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, Bylaag 30/1852, V.R. 224/52, Potgieter, 4.8.1852.

2 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 339-41; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 1 E.V.R.1, pp. 22-3; Ohrig Stad, 26.9.45; Pretorius and Kruger, Argiefstukke, R119/47, Report of Grobler, 14.5.1847.

The growing Pedi disenchantment was matched by mounting Boer hostility to Sekwati and Mabhogo. The weakened Boer community became increasingly alarmed at its inability to secure or control labour, and at losses of stock. Contract labourers absconded often, as a result of disputes with their masters over the length of time they had served, and inboekselings also deserted. In 1852 there appears to have been a major exodus of inboekselings, many of whom headed for Natal, but others sought refuge in neighbouring African societies. Some deserting inboekselings and contract labourers took cattle with them. In fact, a close examination of the documentary record shows that a great deal of 'cattle theft' arose from disputes between Boers and their labourers over length of, and payment for, service. Boer petitioners placed the blame for these events on the atmosphere created by the 'disobedience' of Sekwati and Mabhogo. The reality, of course, was that they stemmed primarily from the relationships of exploitation within Boer-dominated society. Nonetheless the existence of independent African polities increasingly powerful and resistant to Boer control did provide places of refuge and compound problems of labour control.[1]

There were wide-spread accusations by Boers that Pedi had raided their cattle. Some of the more extravagant allegations of losses were made once it was known that military action was contemplated against the Pedi, and need, therefore, to be treated with considerable caution. There is nonetheless evidence that cattle were stolen and that deserted farmhouses in the environs of Ohrigstad were rifled. While the blame for this was laid at Sekwati's door, the reality appears to have been that various of the Koni and other groups settled in the region took advantage of the weakened state of the Trekker community to make good some of their own

---

[1] S.A.A.R., Transvaal 1, Bylaag 20, 1849, V.R. 8/49; Petition, Breytenbach and 34 others, 19.9.1849; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 657-60; S.A.A.R., Transvaal Argiefstukke, R 216/50, Complaints made by Espag, 3.7.1850; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, E.V.R., 3, pp. 145-53, Lydenburg, 5.5.1851; E.V.R., 3, pp. 181-5, 26.11.1851.

losses.[1] There was also considerable concern within the Trekker community at the reports that the Pedi had accumulated large quantities of firearms. These reports stemmed partly from Swazi sources, and while the Pedi had accumulated some guns, their numbers were greatly exaggerated. Sekwati was also held responsible for having encouraged groups to reject Boer authority and claim allegiance to the Maroteng paramountcy. The likelihood is that the key influence in this process was Boer action and exaction.[2] In short, Sekwati and Mabhogo were held responsible for the changing balance of power in the region and for stimulating increasing resistance to Boer demands for labour and tribute. Although the diagnosis was crude, the intended remedy - which was to launch attacks on the Maroteng and Ndzundza Ndebele strongholds - if successful, would have eased problems of acquiring and controlling labour and securing tribute and would have played an important part in resetting the balance of power in favour of the Trekkers.

In the event the combined attacked launched on Phiring in 1852 by a Zoutpansberg commando under Potgieter and a Lydenburg commando led by P. Nel, failed to have the desired effect. The Boers baulked at storming the stronghold, particularly as its defenders had some firearms, and the African auxiliaries - principally Transvaal Ndebele from Zebedelia's chiefdom - made little progress. Tactics of siege were employed but failed to force the Pedi into submission. After twenty days, the siege was lifted, but 5000 cattle and 6000 small stock were seized and some children were captured. Maroteng power, though dented, remained intact and was not again to be

---

1 Ibid. T.A. L.L. 1, Complaints, Steyn, 5.6.1852, Bührmann, 4.11.1852, Versveld, 27.8.1852, and Venter, 24.9.1852; L 13, Report by Combrink, 1854-1860; Ramaila, Setlogo, p. 49.

2 S.A.A.R., Transvaal 1, E.V.R., 3, pp. 7-28, Kriegers Post, 19.9.1849, 20.9. 1849. The allegation was made that Sekwati had 70 guns. Pedi informants told German missionaries ten years later that they had about 20, Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, p. 354; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, Bylaag, 27, 1852, V.R. 220/52, Potgieter, 15.7.1852, Bylaag 30, 1852, V.R. 224/52, Potgieter, 4.8.1852.

directly challenged by a Boer army until 1876.[1] The attack, however, had allowed Lydenburgers and Zoutpansbergers to recoup some of the losses of stock they had suffered over the previous years.

The extent to which the balance of power had shifted was graphically demonstrated by the failure of the 1852 attack and it compounded rather than solved the problems of labour supply and control. Complaints of labour shortage became even more strident within Boer society and in part in response to these, the Lydenburg Commandant W.F. Joubert,was instructed in 1853 to negotiate a peace agreement with Sekwati. It remains unclear, however, whether he made any attempt to act upon this instruction. In any event, the complaints over the dearth of contract labour continued in the following years.[2]

In 1856, the decision of the Lydenburg community to secede from the South African Republic and establish itself as an independent Republic gave additional incentive for it to seek to come to some rapprochement with the Pedi paramount. In 1857, a commission was despatched to Sekwati with instructions to attempt to reach agreement on the key issues in dispute. There was little advantage to the Pedi paramount in continuing a relationship of unresolved hostility to the Lydenburg community and Sekwati welcomed the opportunity to establish a basis for co-existence. A key problem remains with both the accounts of the negotiations and the text of the agreement concluded, in that historians are wholly reliant on partial Lydenburg Republic sources and have little notion of the Pedi perspective on either.[3] Sekwati declined to pay even token tribute or to act against

---

1 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 353-5; S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2 Bylaag 10, 1853, V.R., 240/53, Reports by Nel, 10.2.1853; S.A.A.R., Transvaal Argiefstukke, R 435/52, and de Clercq, 2.10.1852, and R439/52, Report by Potgieter, 16.10.1852.

2 S.A.A.R., Transvaal 2, Bylaag 85, 1853, V.R. 327/53, Petition, Van der Merwe and 12 others, 16,9.1853 and E.V.R., 3, pp. 409-24, Lydenburg, 19.9.1853; T.A., L1, Volksraad Notule, 19.5.1856; L 8, 9/1856, de Beer, 17.5.1856.

3 T.A., L 1, Volksraad Notule Oct. 1857, Art 26-30, L 7, Instructions to Commission to Sekwati, 29.10.1857; L 13, Report of the Negotiations with Sekwati, Van Niekerk, 19.11.1857 and Text of the Agreement, 17 November 1857; Van Reenen 'Verhoudinge', pp. 192-5

arms traders. On the land question, the commissioners found him to be obdurate as he refused to accept that the Swazi had any right to sell the land upon which the Maroteng and their subjects lived. The commissioners claimed that they persuaded Sekwati to recognise some force to Boer claims to the land beyond the heartland of the Pedi polity, but in the formal agreement no specific reference is made to the question of the ownership of the land. The formal agreement did however state that the Steelpoort River should mark the boundary between the domains of the Pedi polity and the Lydenburg Republic.[1]

The commissioners were also anxious to secure assistance of the paramount in tracing and returning refugee labourers and in curbing cattle theft: the Lydenburghers having failed to solve their problems of labour control by defeating Sekwati now turned to the paramount to assist them to retain their labour. While the formal agreement suggests that Sekwati agreed to provide such aid, there is no evidence that he returned refugees, although he did return cattle taken by absconding labourers and allowed stolen cattle to be traced by their owners. The agreement also stipulated that while Pedi could carry firearms and possess horses to the north of the Steelpoort River they should not do so to the south of it. This stipulation was designed not only to allay the Lydenburg community's fear of possible raids, but also to restrict the activities of Pedi hunters.

While the 1857 agreement marked the recognition of the Lydenburg authorities that they were not in a position to enforce their authority on the Pedi polity, they did not abandon their attempts to establish their rights to the land upon which groups to the south of the Steelpoort lived, or to extract rent, tribute and labour from them. They were, however, to encounter continued resistance from these societies, and the Kopa and the NdzundzaNdebele continued in the forefront of the rejection of Boer claims

---

[1] Ibid.

and demands. In the following years, it was conflicts with these chiefdoms which absorbed the greater part of the attention of the Lydenburg officials.[1]

In 1853, the Maroteng left Phiring and established a new settlement to the east of the Leolu mountains. There were a number of reasons for this move. Although the defences at Phiring had weathered the storms which had broken against them, the battles with the Boers and the Zulus had nonetheless revealed a number of vulnerabilities. The most important of these was that the principal water supplies for the capital lay at some distance from the fortified hill, at its heart, and could be, and were, controlled by besieging armies. The new capital enclosed within Tsate valley and sheltered beneath the slopes of the Leolu combined advantages of relatively high rainfall and the superior productive capacity of mist belt soils with well-placed springs, and with access to and protection from the formidable natural defences provided by the Leolu range. Sekwati, along with his wives and some of his sons, lived on the top of Mosego hill (Thaba Mosego) which gave its name to the settlement. All the approaches to the summit of the hill were fortified with stone walls and pole fences through which a narrow winding path led upwards. In the latter half of the 1850s, Sekwati - well-advanced in years, blind, and in failing health, descended the hill increasingly rarely, but still kept his finger on the pulse of the polity and sought to ensure that neither he nor his subjects gave either provocation or opportunity for fresh Zulu, Swazi or Boer attack.[2]

---

1 T.A., L 19, Report, Potgieter, 25.11.1859 and 26.11.1859; B.M.B., 1862, 341; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 140-45, 214-27.

2 Merensky, 'Geschichte', B.M.B., 1862, pp. 355-6; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 25.

SECTION TWO

THE PEDI DOMAIN

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter outlines the structure and content of key relationships of power within the Pedi polity and focuses, in particular, on the form and nature of the dominance achieved by the Maroteng under Sekwati and Sekhukhune. Its principal object is to set the scene for the accounts of economic change, political process and the impact of christianity and missionaries contained in the following chapters in this section. It also, however, explores relationships which while not richly documented for the period of this study played a key role in shaping the nature and course of economic and political process and were in turn partially transformed by these processes.

Unfortunately, the reconstruction of these relationships is partly dependent on normative descriptions of past practice recorded in the twentieth century. While these contain valuable nuggets of information, they often fail to distinguish adequately between ideology and practice and between past and present relationships. However, where possible, the description which follows has drawn on the documentation available on Pedi society in the 1860s and 1870s in order to supplement, correct and situate modern, mainly ethnographic sources. The existence of this evidence helps disentangle the real from the ideal and the past from the present.

The Pedi polity consisted of a number of chiefdoms in the north-east Transvaal which recognised the authority and accepted the rule of the Maroteng paramountcy. Estimates of the size of the population which fell under Maroteng sway are impressionistic and imprecise, but give a rough guide. Missionary estimates in the 1860s posited a population in the Pedi heartland of about 60-70,000. In the late 1870s, officials of the

Transvaal State placed the population of the same area at 70-100,000.[1]

The population of chiefdoms lived, in the main, in single concentrated settlements and accounts of the Pedi domain in this period describe villages ranging in size from fifty to well over 5000 inhabitants. The villages were usually situated close to mountain slopes, valley sides and hills. This pattern of settlement stemmed from a combination of chiefly power and the imperatives of defence; it also facilitated access to the range of resources required by Pedi agricultural and pastoral production. Broadly, the higher lying lands provided pasturage for stock while valley floors and plains located at the foot of the mountains provided land well suited to cultivation. Beyond this broad divide, however, Pedi producers sought a combination of different soil and veld types in order to enhance production under differing seasonal and climatic conditions and to spread risk. The valley of Tsate in which Sekwati's new capital was located for example, contained a variety of soil types on the valley floor and the surrounding slopes of the Leolu Mountains provided seasonal pasture. There were also good water sources. Chiefdoms, however, also maintained cattle posts at some distance from the principal settlements so that stock could gain access to adequate and appropriate grazing and to avoid damage to local veld cover and crops.[2]

There was a broad, although by no means static or absolute, sexual division of labour. Women undertook the bulk of the work in the fields. They were the potters and also did the clay work on the huts and courtyards. Women made sleeping mats and baskets. They also ground grain, cooked, brewed beer and collected wood and water. Men undertook some labour in the fields during peak periods of activity in the agricultural cycle and

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, p. 358; T.A., S.N.5, unnumbered Sekukuni papers and S.N.2, 262/79, n.d.

2 B.M.B., 1862, p. 91; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 25, 95-6, 179; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 152-3; Sansom, 'Traditional rulers and their realms', W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed.), The Bantu Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, (London, 1974), pp. 268-9.

hunted and herded. They performed the woodwork in hut construction and also did the roofing, prepared hides and sewed pelt karosses and made wooden storage vessels; and were also the principal metal workers and the relatively specialised smiths.[1]

Villages were divided into kgoro: which the historical evidence suggests were in this period territorial units similar to Tswana wards, although they appear in later years to have lost this aspect under conditions of acute overcrowding. Each kgoro consisted of a group of households whose huts were built around a central cattle kraal. They composed an agnatic core, probably with matrilateral and affinal additions, and as indicated above, unrelated groups and individuals were attached, partly by the chief. There appears, in fact, to have been considerable mobility between kgoro probably partly dependant on the quality and quantity of the resources which they commanded. Each retained considerable autonomy of control over the social, economic and jural affairs of its own members. Kgoro were ranked by virtue of the genealogical distance of their ruling core from the ruling agnates within the chiefdom or, in cases where no such relationship could be established, in the notional order in which they became subject to the ruling group. Hence, while agnatic idiom played an important role in this society, neither chiefdoms nor kgoro could be adequately described in kinship terms. Membership of these communities was ultimately determined by the acceptance of the authority of a chief or kgoro-head, rather than by descent.[2]

The population of chiefdoms was divided into a number of distinct strata. The lowest ranked of these were the mathupya, people captured in war or the descendants of captives. These individuals were expected to perform a variety of menial tasks but their position was ameliorated, and they probably acquired higher rank relatively rapidly, because they fell

---

1 Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 28-9; B.M.B., 1861, p. 412.

2 Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 36; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 25-6; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 218-25; C.V. Bothma, Ntshabeleng Social Structure, A Study of a Northern Transvaal Sotho Tribe (Pretoria, 1962), pp. 14-34.

under the personal protection of the chief and as a result of the competition for followers which existed between kgoro. A distinction was made between aliens and individuals related to the ruling group. All foreigners incorporated into the chiefdom through negotiation were known as bafaladi and were considered to be commoners. Individuals related to, but remote from the ruling group were termed balata and described along with the bafaladi as batho feela (people only). The people belonging to the ruling lineage were known as bakgomana.[1]

Age-set organisation provided one group of cross-cutting relationships. The population of chiefdoms were formed into regiments consisting of men or women of the same age group. At intervals of from four to eight years boys and girls at, or over, the age of puberty attended separate initiation lodges and were constituted into regiments under the leadership of high-ranking youths, usually the sons and daughters of the incumbent chief. The process and ritual of initiation was in part designed to bond participants to the royal leader and one key source of support to individual royals in competition for office, were members of their regiments. Regiments were also a principal prop to chiefly power. They fell under direct royal command and provided a vital institution of chiefly rather than kgoro authority. Aside from their military role, chiefs could call on regiments to perform a variety of duties ranging through hunting, the construction of fortifications, guarding cattle, and clearing and working land. Members of regiments, however, continued to live and work as members of kgoro and remained partially dependent on these groups for access to key resources like land and cattle.[2]

---

[1] Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 268-9.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 32-3; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 43; B.M.A. Abt 3, Fach 4/4 Tagebuch Phatametsane, 9. 7. 1865; G.M. Pitje, 'Traditional systems of male education among Pedi and cognate tribes', African Studies, IX, 2, 3, 4 (1950); Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 119-20, 296-7; Bothma, Ntshabeleng, pp. 54-7.

Both regimental and agnatic links played an important role in the formation of new kgoro through the division of existing ones. This was most commonly the result of senior royals, usually contenders for the chiefship, separating from the royal kgoro. The core of such a new kgoro consisted of close agnates and members of the regiments formed under that royal's leadership while other affinely related or unrelated individuals were probably also incorporated.[1]

Also central to relationships of conflict and alliance was the network of ties created by marriage. Unfortunately, little detail is available in historical sources on Pedi marriage strategies other than that a preference existed for close kin marriages which corresponds to the broader Sotho pattern identified by anthropologists. Schapera has shown that amongst the Tswana, whose social organisation resembles that of the Pedi, nobles and commoners follow strikingly different marriage strategies and that the actual pattern of marriage differs markedly from the ideal. Nobles (bakgomana) show a clear preference for marriages with close agnates. Schapera explains this as the result of an attempt to convert the tense and competitive relationships within the ruling group into relationships of affinity and later matrifiliation. While this explanation is partially convincing, Bonner has also pointed out in relation to the Swazi that marriages with close kin tend to restrict the circulation of bridewealth goods, and to retain them within the ruling group.[2]

Kuper has attempted a comparative treatment of the social structure of Sotho-speaking peoples, including the Pedi, which while ahistorical is nonetheless suggestive. He generalises Schapera's analysis of noble marriage strategies and argues that one factor shaping the marriage preferences of commoners was the desire to contract and cement alliances

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, pp. 364-7; C.V. Bothma, 'The political structure of the Pedi of Sekhukhuneland', African Studies, 35, 3-4 (1976), pp. 184-9; Bothma, Ntshabeleng, pp. 21-30; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 226-34.

2 A. Kuper, 'The social structure of the Sotho-speaking peoples of Southern Africa', Africa, 45, 1, 2, (1975), 1, 79; Bonner, 'The Swazi', pp. 48-52.

with the ruling groups within chiefdoms. Impressionistic historical evidence tends to support these contentions. Marriages of this kind however not only gave commoners political influence and protection but also provided them with a means of enhancing their status within the society and thus a means of mediating competing principles of ascription and achievement. While marriage with a woman of high rank partially transformed status and recognised achievement, these concessions were bought at the price of relatively high bridewealth payments. A picture can, therefore, be tentatively suggested in which the nature of marriage strategies served both to restrict the circulation of bridewealth goods - most importantly cattle - within the ruling group and to contribute to a redistribution of cattle from commoners to the bakgomana and royals within chiefdoms, through rank-related bridewealth levels and exchanges.[1]

Differential accumulation of cattle and other bridewealth goods also facilitated and was, in turn, promoted by differential rates of polygyny. The evidence for Pedi society suggests that polygyny on any scale was principally the prerogative of the chiefs and the bakgomana, but detailed evidence is not available for the 1860s and 1870s. This pattern of polygyny had a number of consequences. Women played the key role in agricultural production in Pedi society and, crudely put, more wives meant more labour power, and the ability to claim and work larger areas of land. Chiefs and royals explicitly defended polygyny against missionary onslaught in terms of their need for labour and grain.[2] However, as indicated above and as will be further explored, women were also in part a crucial form of economic and political capital.

---

1 Kuper, 'Social structure', 1, 79; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 86; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 36; B.M.B., 1862, p. 205; B.M.A. Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 16. 9. 1864.

2 Ibid.; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 95-100, 17-20. 12. 1862.

Access to, and control over, women and cattle were key components in relations of power at all levels of the society. The corporate nature of the kgoro was, for example, partially symbolised by the fact that a common cattle kraal was the focus of settlement. It is probable that in Pedi society in this period, some households were not cattle-holders in their own right and were partially dependent on kgoro membership for access to cattle. Unmarried men were prevented from owning cattle and this reinforced their dependence on senior agnates to pay the bridewealth for their marriages. Until marriage, a man was denied independent access to land and labour.[1]

Cattle and prestige, and often trade goods also tended to move up the social hierarchy by means other than marriage exchanges. They were handed to chiefs as gifts, fines, fees and tribute and seized in punishment and in raids. Chiefs, however, also received tribute in beer, in a flat basket of grain at the end of the harvest from married women, and in specified portions of slaughtered stock. Aside from control over regimental labour, chiefs also received tribute labour from women of subordinate kgoro who hoed, sowed, and maintained a portion of the chief's lands. While much stress has been laid on the redistributional role of chiefs in this and similar societies, there is a danger that ideology is mistaken for practice. An example of the way in which rulers fostered the image of themselves as benefactors rather than extractors is provided by the missionary observation in the 1860s that while all gifts were presented to chiefs in private and in secret, chiefly benificence was always given the maximum possible public display. Redistribution was, however, a reality, both as an ideology and because chiefs, in part,

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach, 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 30. 9. 1864; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 164-6.

invested accumulated wealth in relationships of clientage and in maintaining popular support. There was, however, no simple reciprocity between giving and receiving and chiefs presided over a complex system of redistribution which served to sustain chiefly power.[1]

Chiefs also allocated lands to the constituent kgoro of the chiefdom and set boundaries in time and space in agricultural and pastoral production. They settled disputes unresolved by senior agnates within the kgoro and those that occurred between kgoro and punished offenders. The chief and his principal wife also played a central part in rain-making rituals. The evidence from the 1860s and 1870s suggests that rain-making was a major chiefly pre-occupation, and that concern for rain dominated a wide variety of rituals and taboos. Given the capricious climatic conditions under which the Pedi lived, this is hardly surprising, and historical records also reveal the importance of this aspect of the chiefly role in popular perception of and support for the chiefship. The relationship between society and natural forces was, in part, seen as mediated through the person and office of the chief. The spirits of previous chiefs were also propitiated by the chiefdom as a whole and the chief acted as intermediary between his subjects and his ancestors and officiated at all rites concerning them.[2]

The structure and content of relationships of power within the paramount chiefdom, in the main, resembled those within the subordinate chiefdoms. The Maroteng had, however, also incorporated and elaborated a number of means to symbolise, maintain and enforce their dominance within the wider polity, and to administer their subjects.

---

[1] Ibid.; A. Merensky, Beiträge zur Kenntniss Sud Afrikas, (Berlin, 1875) pp. 106-7; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 87; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 188, 287-91; B.M.A. Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 1. 8. 1862.

[2] B.M.B. 1878, pp. 423-4; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 81-2, 7.11.1862; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 143; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 37; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 56-7; W. Eiselen, 'Uber die Hauptlingswurde bei den Bapedi', Africa, V, 3, (1932), pp. 303-5.

As has been argued previously, while the Maroteng under Sekwati were able to establish a position of hegemony in the aftermath of the difaqane they were neither able to effect a radical restructuring of relationships of economic and political control nor were they in a position to extinguish the alternative foci of power that remained and emerged in the wake of the Ndwandwe exodus. Although the Maroteng chiefdom secured a formal dominance its position in relationship to the more powerful of its subject chiefdoms could verge on that of primus inter pares. The latter exercised a regional hegemony within the polity and the paramountcy's authority over some notionally subject groups was in fact mediated through these regional foci of power. The extent and content of the paramount's power and authority was, of course, not static or rigidly defined and as following chapters will attempt to demonstrate, the struggle to enlarge or, conversely, to restrict its scope, was a dominant theme in the development of the polity.[1]

In the last resort, the continued dominance of the Maroteng depended on their ability to enforce their rule by force of arms. In 1862, the B.M.S. missionaries watched the Pedi army assemble in preparation for a punitive expedition. Through the day the regiments of the subordinate chiefdoms arrived at the capital and the army finally totalled some 10,000 men. Each local contingent was under the command of its own leader and remained a separate unit within the wider army. The centre of the army when it set out consisted of the paramount and the regiments from the capital, while its flanks consisted of the men from subject chiefdoms. The army encamped for the night and proceeded some distance the next morning before halting on an open plain. At this point, the standard-

---

[1] B.M.B., 1861, pp. 305-6. See also ch. 1, part 2 and ch. 4.

bearers from the various contingents bearing standards made mainly from ostrich feathers approached and saluted the paramount. In this instance the intended object of attack was kept secret until the very end and the regiments from the fated chiefdom remained in the wider army unaware of the violence about to be done to themselves and their village.[1]

The paramount's capacity to play the military card in his relationship with subordinate chiefdoms was limited by a number of factors. Although the Maroteng while under the leadership of Sekwati had emerged as probably the largest and best armed chiefdom, it was nonetheless, not possessed of overwhelming force and as the above description shows was partly dependent on the assistance of subject groups to ensure success against internal dissidents and external threats. This placed considerable constraints on internal despoliation, for if subordinates were attacked too often, the possibility of subject groups forming an alliance against the paramountcy or transferring their allegiance to a competitor for overall authority was enhanced. Even more serious in the threatening environment of the eastern Transvaal in this period was that subordinate groups might fail to provide their regiments to assist in the defence of the capital in the event of an attack by a major external enemy. Failure to provide such support was, of course, a distinctly double-edged weapon, when its consequence was likely to be the imposition of Boer rule and exaction or increased vulnerability to Zulu and Swazi raids. Nonetheless, the extent to which the Maroteng could unsheath and employ a naked military blade against their subjects was circumscribed. The degree to which the use of force was constrained and the Maroteng depended on the military assistance of their subjects also had a moderating effect on the extent of Maroteng demands for tribute from the subordinate chiefdoms and ensured that the

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 367-73; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 130-34.

appropriation of surplus was elaborately cloaked rather than starkly and openly enforced.[1]

Sansom has provided an elegant, if incomplete and ahistorical, analysis of some of the principal forms of dominance maintained by the Maroteng based mainly on the material in twentieth century ethnographies and collections of oral tradition.[2] Nevertheless, when tested against and supplemented by evidence from the 1860s and 1870s and situated in the historical context outlined above, his account provides important insights into the nature of the polity.

Sekwati and the reconstituted Maroteng chiefdom secured recognition in the 1830s as legitimate heirs to Thulare's paramountcy's rank and ritual pre-eminence and established themselves as ritual superiors over their subordinates. The authority for the major ritual performances which involved chieftainship and marked key phases in the productive cycle was derived from the paramount. Each year subordinate chiefs supplicated for permission to sow crops and later to harvest them. At intervals of four or more years they sought permission to hold initiation lodges. These requests were accompanied by gifts of limited quantities of grain and cattle. Tribute was in these instances seen as a return for the delegation of ritual authority and subordinates were made dependent on the paramount in the ritual legitimation of office.[3]

---

1 Ibid.; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 338-43. This portrayal is also influenced by E. Terray, 'Classes and class consciousness in the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman', M. Bloch (ed.) Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology, (London, 1975), pp. 113-20. See also, M. Godelier, 'Anthropology, History and Ideology', Critique of Anthropology, 6, (1976), 46.

2 Sansom, 'Traditional Rulers', pp. 268-71. His analysis is heavily and fruitfully influenced by E. Leach, 'The structural implications of matrilateral cross cousin marriage', E. Leach, Rethinking Anthropology, (London, 1961), ch. 3.

3 Ibid.; B.M.A. abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 19.8.1865.

The paramount also delegated and designated rank and legitimacy through dispensing wives to subordinate chiefs. These were mainly the sisters and daughters of the paramount and became the principal wives of the chiefs to whom they were married and thus potentially mothers to the successors to the chiefship. This pattern repeated over two or more generations constituted a form of classificatory cross-cousin marriage. The arrival of the royal bride was a major ceremonial event. All fires within the chiefdom were extinguished and subsequently relit in order of rank by an ember taken from a fire kindled in her new courtyard. As a result the chief wife had the special titles of Setima-mello (extinguisher of fires) or Lebone (candle, or lantern).[1]

The granting of such a wife by the paramount confirmed subordinate chiefs in office, supplied recognition to heirs to office, and sanctioned and symbolised the creation and incorporation of new chiefdoms. The relationships established also provided the paramount with links with members of the core of the ruling group in subordinate chiefdoms. The rank and legitimacy of the latter derived in part from their connection to, and the continuing authority of, the Maroteng. These relationships also provided the paramount with an entree into the political process within subordinate chiefdoms and a lever to attempt to direct its course. In particular, in the 1860s and 1870s, the paramountcy intervened in succession disputes to advance the cause of designated and favoured candidates for office whose desire for autonomy was mediated by their need for support.[2]

---

[1] Sansom, 'Traditional Rulers', pp. 270-1; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 708, 7.7.1868; B.M.B., 1878, p. 423; Eiselen, 'Hauptlingswurde', p. 299; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 256-60.

[2] Ibid.; Mönnig, 'Baroka', pp. 172-3; B.M.B. 1878, p. 426; Ramaila, Setlogo, Sa Batau, pp. 60-62; see also ch. 8, part 3, and ch. 9, part 2.

These concessions of rank and authority were, as Sansom has pointed out, secured at a price. The bridewealth paid for women of high rank was relatively great and in the case of the Lebone was contributed by the whole of the subordinate chiefdom. In the best documented example of such a transaction in the 1860s, the paramount received 100 oxen as part of the bridewealth paid for a senior daughter who married the designated heir to the Mphaphlele chiefdom. The size of the bridewealth was partially based on the rank of the bride which in turn varied according to the power of the subordinate chiefdom. The payment of inflated bridewealth served to symbolise and tap wealth and power.[1]

The marriage transactions were, therefore, the occasions of substantial transfers of cattle, and probably other prestige goods, from the subjects and rulers of subordinate chiefdoms to the paramountcy. However, they also involved a concession of authority which entitled subordinate rulers to retain tribute raised in their own domains and in turn, to transact rank and status transmitted through women against cattle. As suggested above and particularly in the case of the paramountcy this was a political economy in which the sisters and daughters of rulers constituted vital economic and political capital. The paramount as dispenser of rank had also to ensure that his principal wife should be pre-eminent in rank, but in the main, the bridewealth he received would have exceeded that which he and the Maroteng paid. The paramount also received women in tribute and as gifts who provided additional labour and who could be taken as wives with no, or token, bridewealth payment, but whose daughters would subsequently be of relatively high rank. Sekhukhune, Sekwati's successor, had fifty-six wives.[2]

---

[1] Sansom, 'Traditional Rulers', pp. 270-71; U.A. Tagebuch A, Nachtigal, 1, p. 708, 7.7. 1868; B.M.A. Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 16.9.1864.

[2] Sansom, 'Traditional Rulers', pp. 270-71; Ramaila, Setlogo, p. 55; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 165; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 182-3; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 211.

Also important was the paramountcy's overall authority over land. New groups entering the area approached the paramount with gifts of women and cattle and were granted land upon which to settle. Land once granted fell under the control of subordinate groups and many groups within the area had been in effective occupation and control of their land before the paramountcy had been resurrected. Nonetheless if groups wished to extend the ara of land or came into conflict with neighbours, the paramount's permission and mediation could play a significant role. Thus, while the control which the paramount could exercise was far from complete both he and subordinate rulers had some capacity to grant differential access to the means of production within the heartland of the polity.[1]

The paramount not only received substantial bridewealth in return for his sisters and daughters, but he also received tribute in ivory, skins, horns, grain, cattle, women and labour. He was able to call on the services of the regiments of both his own and subordinate chiefdoms and appropriated a substantial share of the products of hunts and raids. He demanded a portion of the goods carried by traders into his domain in exchange for the right to trade amongst his subjects and also accumulated a substantial share of the items in demand amongst traders which enabled him to both attract clients and reward service with a range of sought-after commodities.[2]

However, the principal store and symbol of the paramount's wealth were the royal herds. These, on the accession of a new ruler, were added to and paraded before his subjects. The bulk of these herds were divided and moved between various cattle posts and were able to range in search of

---

1 Interview, Rev. E.M.E. Mothubatse, 9.11.1976; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 38; Bothma, 'Political structure', p. 178.

2 Interview, Mothubatse, 9.11.1976; B.M.A. Abt 3 Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 1.8.1862; C. 2482, no. 158, Statement of Tamakanabefore M. Clarke, 26.10.1879; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 130-32.

sources of water and superior seasonal pasture over much of the Pedi domain. The extent and increase of these herds enabled the paramount to supply meat and milk to his subjects along with the beer and grain which he made available. These herds also enabled the paramount to loan cattle to the displaced and often impoverished communities and individuals who sought refuge in his domain. He was thus able to build up a network of clientage which linked subordinate groups and individuals in subject chiefdoms to him. The paramount also made outright gifts of cattle in reward for service or to secure compliance with his wishes.[1]

The paramount's court was also the final court of appeal for cases undecided in the courts of subordinate chiefdoms or which arose from disputes between subject groups. This judicial role both afforded the Maroteng income from fines and fees and enabled them to exercise political leverage.[2] Most importantly, however, the process of dispute settlement involved the batseta system which played a vital role in the administration of the polity. Within chiefdoms, formal relations between the kgoro and the ruling nucleus were maintained through a network of intermediaries known as batseta who were usually senior members of kgoro. Batseta from higher ranking kgoro acted as intermediaries for kgoro of lower rank. Lower ranking kgoro did not, however, have to act through all higher ranking kgoro but only through that appointed as its batseta group.

This batseta system was elaborated under the rule of the Maroteng to maintain formal relationships between themselves and their subordinate chiefdoms. Various kgoro at the capital, but mainly those closely related

---

1 Interview, Mothubatse, 9.11.1976; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 129; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 165; B.M.B. 1862, pp. 94-5; B.M.B. 1869, p. 325; Cattle loaning played a key role in both southern Sotho and Tswana political systems and is more fully documented than in the Pedi case. See, for example, L.M. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870 (Oxford, 1975), pp. 61-2, 95-8, and Q.N. Parsons, 'The economic history of Khama's country, 1844-1930', in R. Palmer and Q.N. Parsons (eds.) The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa (London, 1977), pp. 114-7.

2 U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 150, 17.4.1864; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 102-3.

to the ruling group, acted as batseta for from one to more than a dozen subject chiefdoms. These kgoro were responsible for representatives of these groups when they visited the capital and they settled unresolved disputes or referred them to the paramount. Over time, they built up an expert knowledge of the affairs of the chiefdoms in their charge and of local conditions and conflicts. They also kept these communities informed of political process and policy at the centre of the polity and could in turn present their case to the paramount and in public debate. The batseta system was both a politically sensitive means of administration and, particularly through the fees from dispute settlement, gave a number of kgoro at the capital a material stake in the wider polity.[1]

Meetings of varying degrees of exclusivity also played a key role in the political process in both the paramountcy and the subordinate chiefdoms. While detailed accounts of some of these will be given in ensuing chapters it is worth making some broad points about their composition and nature. The tendency in modern ethnographic accounts is to construct a typology of councils on the basis of differing formal membership. The historical evidence is, however, that participation in these meetings was fluid and incident and issue specific. A broad distinction can, however, be made between meetings in the lapa (courtyard) of the chief and pitso. The former usually comprised the ruler and his closest aids, usually his brothers and uncles, but also clients possessed of special skills and information. These meetings could be broadened to include a wider set of royals and even all the heads of subordinate kgoro ; and they played a central role in the formulation of policy and the administration of the polity.[2]

---

1 B.M.B., 1864, p. 366; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 299; Bothma, 'Political Structure', p. 189; Interview, Mothubatse, 9.11.1976.

2 Bothma, 'Political Structure', p. 194; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 285; B.M.B. 1878, pp. 422-6; C.2482, no. 158, Statement of Nopatula, 25.10.1879.

The still more broadly based pitso were attended by all the initiated men of the chiefdom and, in the case of the paramountcy, surrounding groups. Major and contentious issues were discussed in this forum. This allowed the weight of popular opinion to be brought to bear on the royals who otherwise monopolised decision-making, and tested the strength of the various political factions which formed within chiefdoms. The paramount was able to gauge the strength of, and divisions within, popular feeling and to moderate or even reverse policy in its light. He was also able, through invoking popular will, to distance himself and his aids from primary responsibility for divisive or daunting decisions.[1]

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that the partially normative and structural discussion of the polity undertaken above is not intended to stand alone but to complement preceding and succeeding accounts of economic and political process. These both touch on areas of the paramount's authority neglected here and attempt a more dynamic presentation of the changing content, form and distribution of power within the polity. The rights claimed and exercised by the Maroteng were continually refracted through complex and shifting relationships of power within the Pedi domain and the eastern Transvaal. Sansom, for example, is wrong to suggest that all subordinate groups took their chief wives from the paramountcy. The pattern appears rather to have been that groups settled in the environs of larger chiefdoms with regional hegemony within the polity took their Lebone from their powerful neighbours. With these relationships and transactions, as with others, while the paramount sought to establish direct control over, and links with, subordinate groups, the more powerful of the subject chiefdoms attempted to ensure that the exercise of power and passage of tribute was mediated through them.[2] Equally, as discussed

---

1 Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 183-7; C.2482 no. 158, Statement of Tamakana before M. Clarke, 26.10.1879.

2 Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 54-61; Bothma, 'Political structure', p. 179.

above and examined further below, the forces which propelled groups into the heartland of the Pedi domain and held them there were partly generated by the activities of Zulu and Swazi regiments and the effects of Boer settlement and exaction. The nature of the Pedi polity was determined in fundamental ways by the context from which it emerged, and the turbulent political and economic environment in which it developed. Its domain was, in part, a place of refuge.[1]

The area of effective Maroteng authority was also, of course, not static. In the 1860s the core of the polity and the area under closest control were the valleys, slopes and neighbouring plains of the Leolu mountains. The heartland of the polity encompassed the triangle formed by the confluence of the Olifants and Steelpoort Rivers with important extensions to the north provided by the domains of the Mphaphlele and Magakala chiefdoms. Over significant areas of this heartland however, the power of the Maroteng was partly mediated through and in competition with that of local foci of power and authority. Beyond this heartland, to the south, lay an area in which Boer, Swazi and Pedi authority and power overlapped, and which in the following decade became the object of heightened conflict and competition.[2]

---

[1] For a fuller discussion of this point see ch. 1, part 3, ch. 4, part 2, and ch. 6, part 3.

[2] Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 186; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 140-41; B.M.B., 1863, p. 6; B.M.B. 1870, p. 390.

CHAPTER THREE

MIGRANT LABOUR

The success of the Pedi in fending off Zulu and Boer attacks on Phiring in the early 1850s, and the growing power of the polity in the 1860s and 1870s, owed a good deal to the increasingly widespread possession, and sophisticated military deployment, of fire-arms. In 1862 Merensky calculated that the Pedi army fully mobilized comprised 12,000 men, of whom a third or more had guns. By 1876 the Pedi regiments approached being fully equipped with guns, and the anachronistic muskets which had constituted the bulk of their armoury in the 1860s had been replaced by breech-loading rifles. This accumulation of weapons was in large part achieved by means of a system of migrant labour which had its roots in the 1840s but which increased in scale and importance over the following thirty years.[1]

Most existing explanations of the origins of migrant labour in southern Africa are of limited usefulness in accounting for Pedi migrancy in this period. Over the last decade voluntarist explanations for the origins and causes of labour migration have been supplanted by accounts which stress the decisive role of military defeat, the subjection to the control and exactions of colonial states, natural disasters and impoverishment.[2] Essentialist explanations have also flourished which

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, p. 358; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 30 and 293.

[2] For example, C. Bundy, 'African peasants and economic changes in South Africa, 1870-1913, with particular reference to the Cape', unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1976, pp. 148-9; J.J. Guy, 'The destruction of a pre-capitalist economy and the origin of labour supplies: the Zulu Case', unpub. seminar paper, Conference on Southern African Labour History, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976, pp. 1-15; W. Beinart, 'Joyini Inkomo: cattle advances and the origins of migrancy from Pondoland', Journal of Southern African Studies, 5, 2 (1979), pp. 199-200; D. Webster, 'From peasant to proletarian: the development/underdevelopment debate in South Africa', Africa Perspective, 13 (1979), pp. 1-13. These accounts illustrate aspects of this characterization - none are reduceable to it.

have projected analyses of the system of migrant labour appropriate to the twentieth century into the past, and which have sought the explanation of the origins of migrancy in capitalist producers' attempts to minimize labour costs.[1]

The participation of the Pedi in labour migration pre-dated the conquest of the society by forty years. It preceded the imposition of a structure of administration and taxation, and major economic reverses like rinderpest and East Coast Fever. Migrancy, in fact, played a key role in enabling the polity to retain effective political independence. The evidence on this period of Pedi involvement provides a pointed reminder that the early stages of participation of southern African societies in labour migration presents a diverse picture in terms of both causes and effects. It also serves as a warning against taking the incidence of migrancy as a simple barometer of 'underdevelopment'. This chapter seeks to describe the system of migration, to explore the complex and changing patterns of production and exchange which promoted it, and to situate its causes and consequences within the context of the changing relationships of power within the Pedi polity.[2]

The first detailed accounts of Pedi labour migration became available after the arrival of the Berlin missionaries in the area in 1861. By 1862, Merensky was writing about the hundreds of men who travelled

---

1 For example, E. Webster, 'Background to the supply and control of labour in the gold mines', E. Webster (ed.), Essays in Southern Africa Labour History, (Johannesburg 1978), pp. 7-12. For an exception to and critique of this position see P. Harries, 'Kinship, ideology and the origins of migrant labour', unpub. seminar paper, C.I.A.S., University of London, January 1980, pp. 1-54. For a further discussion of some of the points raised by Harries see W. Beinart and P. Delius, 'The family and early migrancy in Southern Africa', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, University of London, May 1979.

2 An earlier version of this chapter will appear as P. Delius, 'Migrant Labour and the Pedi, 1840-1880', in A. Atmore and S. Marks (eds.) Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa (forthcoming).

from the north-eastern Transvaal to the Cape Colony each year and with the money they earned bought guns and ammunition before returning home. Indeed, this movement of men southwards was so regular that Nachtigal attempted to use it as a way of getting post back to Germany. The Pedi contributed significant numbers to the flow of men and Merensky maintained that it was regarded as established practice among members of the Pedi polity that each youth, on reaching maturity, went to the Cape Colony for one or more years. This comment may well have involved an element of exaggeration, but it does give an indication of the extent of Pedi participation in migrant labour, and it seems probable that the Pedi were the most committed to this system of the major groups of the northern Transvaal at this stage. They were, however, by no means the only society to participate; they constituted an important part of a much wider system which included significant numbers of Sotho and Tsonga from north of the Oliphants River. While the Venda do not appear to have been involved, some Lobedu certainly were, and by 1870 the Zoutpansberg was peppered with individuals who had some grounding in Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk teachings from the Cape and Natal. To the north-west, the Transvaal Ndebele under Mapela participated, and there are also references to migrants from just north of Pretoria. On the southern periphery of the Pedi domain, both the Kopa under Boleu, and the Transvaal Ndebele under Mabhogo were involved, as were the Pai and Pulana. Men from the north and north-east passed through the Pedi area en route, and Merensky believed, in 1862, that it was no exaggeration that in many of the preceding years, up to a thousand guns with accessories had been brought back to the area and through it to the groups living to the north. By 1869, Merensky's colleague, Nachtigal, calculated that a thousand of

Sekhukhune's subjects passed his mission station outside Lydenburg on their way south annually.[1]

Men travelled from the Pedi area in groups as large as 200. They had to travel for fifteen arduous days before they reached the first kraals of Mshweshwe's kingdom by which time there was little, if anything, left of the bag of cooked maize that each man carried as provisions for the journey. From the southern Sotho area, after securing the necessary exit permit or pass from Mshweshwe or the French missionaries in return for service or tribute, they moved on into the Cape Colony. While there are references to Pedi labourers in Colesburg, Victoria, Graff Reinet and even Cape Town, in the main, concentration appears to have been in the environs of Port Elizabeth.[2] Natal was also a destination in the 1860s and 1870s for men from the northern Transvaal. The importation of Indian indentured labour into Natal was suspended between 1866 and 1874 which led to a heightened demand for labour from the interior to work in the sugar fields, and also to relatively high wages. The eastern Transvaal trader R.T.N. James, recorded that in the early 1870s, 'Sekukuni's kaffirs frequently worked in the Natal Plantations' and some accompanied his wagons en route home.[3]

The migrants who travelled to the Cape Colony appear to have laboured as long as they needed to save sufficient money to buy a gun,

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, pp. 356 and 377; B.M.B., 1864, pp. 260 and 263; B.M.B. 1865, p. 99; B.M.B., 1870, p. 388; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 143; Wangemann, Die Berliner Mission, p. 48; B.M.A, Abt 2, Fach 3/1, Nachtigal to his father, 10.9.1861 and Tagebuch 3.9.1861; Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg', p. 38.

2 B.M.B., 1862, pp. 258 and 357; B.M.B., 1868, p. 233; A. Atmore and P. Sanders, 'Sotho arms and ammunition in the nineteenth century', Journal of African History, XIII, 4 (1972), p. 538; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 15, 28-9 and Wangemann, Die Berliner Mission, p.48.

3 University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province Library, A.55 R.T.A. James, 'The Diary of Trader James', 3; B.M.B., 1862, p. 377; Gold Fields Mercury, 7.7.1878; M.J. Tayal, 'Indian indentured labour in Natal, 1890-1911', Indian Economic and Social History Review, XIV, 4 (1978), p. 519.

although they also brought back a range of other commodities, prominent amongst which were cattle, blankets and ammunition. Thus, for example, Jonas Podumo, on the first of his two trips to the Cape Colony worked for eight months, in which time he is reputed to have earned three heifers and six sheep. With the proceeds of the sale of one of these heifers he bought an 'old English soldier's gun'.[1] Other individuals spent as much as two years away before returning. It is difficult to establish precisely how guns were procured. Some migrants may have received them directly in exchange for service, but in the main, the pattern seems to have been that individuals used either cash or stock earned to buy guns elsewhere. Podumo, on his second trip, was defrauded by a Koranna of approximately three pounds with which he was attempting to purchase a gun. This particular piece of dastardliness took place in the environs of Philoppolis. There are also accounts of Pedi returning from Port Elizabeth, who travelled to the Griqua before returning home, and it may be that the Griqua were an important source for the supply of guns. Firearms were also probably purchased from gun-traders in the eastern Cape, and from the southern Sotho.[2]

Returning migrants usually waited in Mshweshwe's area until sufficiently large numbers assembled to make the hazardous journey north. Merensky suggests that these returning groups consisted of between 200 and 500 men. Nevertheless smaller groups were clearly also making their way back, no doubt at considerable risk. One of the most detailed descriptions of a returning group is of Transvaal Ndebele, subjects of Mapela:

---

1 B.M.B. 1868, p. 233; B.M.B., 1862, pp. 356-7; T.A. LL 179, Nachtigal to Landdros, 26.9.1865 and Report of Landdros, 13.6.1866,

2 B.M.B., 1868, p. 237; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 29.

> There were one hundred and thirty men. They all carried guns over their shoulders and besides these they also had a variety of kinds of baggage. ... the group also had fifteen horses with it.[1]

On 26 May 1865, the German missionary Endemann was disturbed late in the evening by the sound of shouting and repeated gun fire. The source of the commotion proved to be a party of migrants announcing and celebrating their return to the Pedi domain. The following morning

> ... the returned labourers bearing themselves proudly passed by the mission station; each was wrapped in a long sheep skin cloak which he had earned in the Cape Colony, and carried a gun and a small bag filled with goods. This was all the reward for one or more years labour. They all wore various forms of head gear, some had red woollen tasseled caps, others felt and straw hats abundantly decorated with ostrich feathers.[2]

The large size of these parties was dictated, in part, by the dangers of attack. Aside from the prohibitions in the Z.A.R. on Africans possessing guns and horses, in 1852 A.H. Potgieter had concluded that the bulk of guns secured by Africans were procured by working in the English colonies. A Krygsraad decision of the same year forbade Africans to cross the Vaal River. Draconian punishments were proposed for those who breached the prohibition or were found in possession of firearms. Veldcornets in border areas were ordered to organize regular patrols and, if necessary, mount commandos to track down groups of returning migrants. The extent to which these measures were implemented is unclear, but the probability is that, as with much of early Z.A.R. 'native policy', there was a marked disjunction between legislation and practice. Certainly, initially, some of the smaller

---

[1] B.M.B., 1865, p. 99; see also, B.M.B., 1862, 357.

[2] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 26.5.1865.

parties were attacked and disarmed. As a result, migrants travelled through areas of white settlement by night, and the larger parties put up effective resistance to attempts to disarm them.[1]

By the 1860s, one's major impression is of the inability of the authorities at Lydenberg and elsewhere to do much more than harrass them. Indeed, the recurring complaint was not of attacks by whites, but of attacks by Mabhogo and, to a much lesser extent, Boleu, on returning migrants. Mabhogo's stronghold lay on the route followed by migrants to and from Mshweshwe, and he staged regular attacks on labour parties. The object of these attacks was clearly to secure guns and other goods and to to practice cannibalism, as outraged Pedi informants told Nachtigal. It is also possible that Mabhogo was attempting to contest Sekhukhune's hegemony over the migrant labour system. By the second half of the 1860s there is strong evidence that while members of Trekker society may have effectively abandoned attempts to stop the flow of men and arms, they were not averse to seeking to profit from it. Subjects of Mabhogo and Lydenburgers collaborated in joint ambushes on smaller parties, sharing the spoils. Sekhukhune was plagued by complaints from his subordinate chiefs and members of groups from further north about these attacks, and they appear to have been an important factor in persuading the Pedi to join forces with a commando sent to attack Mabhogo's stronghold in 1863. The desire to keep a route to the south open, and to reduce or eradicate attacks on groups of migrants was, in fact, a fundamental component of the policy pursued by the paramountcy throughout the 1860s and 1870s.[2]

---

1 B.M.B. 1865, p. 99; S.A.A.R., Transvaal No. 1, Bylaag 32, Krygsraad Decision, 18.12.1852,

2 B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 3/1, Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 20.10.1861; B.M.B. 1862, p. 382, U.A., Tageguch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 413; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 31.12.1862.

Kallaway has suggested in relation to the movement of labour to the diamond fields after their opening in 1869 that 'the willingness of some African societies to accept their role as exporters of labour at an early date, while others resisted until the 1890s and after still present a considerable problem'.[1]

In the Pedi case, the opening of the diamond fields provided a new market for labour to a society already deeply involved in migrancy. The Pedi responded to the demand with rapidity and on a large scale. In 1872, a system of registration of 'native' labour was established on the fields. While the categories employed to indicate origin are vague and the figures provided are dubious in the extreme, nevertheless the returns do suggest that Pedi and Tsonga were major sources of the supply of labour to the fields. In the context of an already existing labour system, the diamond fields offered a number of advantages to the Pedi. The wages paid to African labourers on the fields were reputedly the highest in South Africa. The result was that the amount of time spent away from home was reduced. The time that the Pedi spent on the fields varied between four and eight months. Again the work period appears to have corresponded broadly with the length of time required to purchase a gun. While the journey to the diamond fields was an arduous and dangerous one, and Pedi arrived there in a weakened state, it is unlikely that it was any more taxing than the long haul to Port Elizabeth had been. The flourishing arms trade that existed at the fields presumably reduced the level of effort and risk involved in the purchase of guns. Lacking precise information on the previous conditions under which the Pedi had laboured, it is difficult to make comparisons of working conditions; but this aside, it would seem probable that the diamond

---

[1] P. Kallaway, 'Black responses to an industrialising economy', unpub. Seminar Paper, Conference on South African Labour History, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976, p. 1.

fields represented a marked improvement on the previous options open to the Pedi. However, while the Pedi response to this new demand for labour can be partially accounted for in these terms, clearly wider questions about the reasons for Pedi involvement remain unanswered.[1]

Probably, the first people from the Transvaal to go to the Cape for work were those impoverished and/or displaced by the ravages of the difaqane and its aftermath. Some of these individuals subsequently returned and were integrated into the societies emerging in the post-difaqane environment. Prominent amongst these emerging foci of power was the Pedi polity. The early period of trekker settlement also generated a flow of refugees into the Pedi domain. There are indications that refugees, especially in the early stages, were more prone to migrate and were also more likely to engage in more than one spell of migrancy, although lacking any statistical material it is impossible to demonstrate this conclusively.[2] Again, this may have stemmed from the need to secure the resources necessary to integrate into the societies they had joined, and to do so without entering into too-constricting relationships of clientage to men of wealth and power within Pedi society. Equally, the opportunities for social mobility offered by the hunting economy may have been particularly important to new entrants into Pedi society, as may have been the kinds of affinal relationships they were able to establish. Hence, the acquisition of both firearms and cattle may have conceivably been more important to members of Pedi society of low status than to the longer established members of that society. While, however, migrancy stemming from these causes may well have played a critical role in the earliest phase of migrancy, and, no doubt, continued as a sub-theme

---

[1] R. Siebörger, 'The recruitment and organisation of African labour for the diamond mines', unpub. M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, 1976, pp. 10, 18 and Appendices. This thesis was also of great value in directing me to material on the Pedi at the fields in the Cape archives; B.M.B., 1872, p. 197.

[2] See, for example, B.M.B., 1868, pp. 235-52; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 116-7.

throughout the period under consideration, the scale of migrancy from the Pedi area in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s suggests that a substantially wider involvement was entailed, than simply new and low status members of the society.

Refugees were not alone in their desire and need to acquire cattle. Although it is difficult to construct a complete picture of Pedi cattle holdings in this period, what does emerge from the documentary record is that the drive within the society was towards the accumulation of cattle. The area had been denuded of stock in the 1820s by the Ndwandwe and others, and tsetse fly had reappeared in parts of it. By 1836 while cattle holdings had partially recovered, this process was far from complete, although the suggestion made by Pedi visitors to the southern Sotho that there were no cattle in their homeland at all, probably reflected a caution born of the experience of the consequences of loose talk about cattle to strangers, than reality. As indicated above, the Pedi lost large quantities of cattle in raids in the early 1850s. While the later 1850s and 1860s were largely years of freedom from attack, and presumably witnessed an increase in herds, other enemies of Pedi cattle prominent amongst which was lung-sickness (bovine pleuro pneumonia) which first appeared in the region in 1855, ensured that the rate of increase was slow. Cattle provided milk, meat, hides, and increasingly, draught. The size of a herd was a key indicator of wealth and status within the society. Cattle were also vital means of exchange and forms of tribute. Their key role in the society was, however, as bridewealth goods.[1]

---

[1] Arbousset, Narrative, p. 172; B.M.B., 1862, p. 355; Aylward, Transvaal, p. 126; Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 22-8.

In this light it is significant that parties of migrants were, in the main, composed of young men who travelled south shortly after initiation. This arose partly because men who had not yet married and established households could most easily be abstracted from the society and also because part of the dynamic of this system lay in the need to accumulate bridewealth goods. The senior male kin within the kgoro who were responsible for the payment of bridewealth had a vested interest in encouraging their dependents to earn or invest their wages in cattle. This enabled kgoro and household heads to husband their own herds, while for migrants, securing cattle facilitated - and probably hastened - their marriages.[1]

The overwhelming impression given by the evidence, however, is that a factor of decisive importance in promoting Pedi migrancy was the desire to accumulate guns.[2] The beginning of substantial Pedi participation in labour migration in the early 1850s coincided with a period in which the Pedi were under severe threat from the Zulu, the Swazi and the Trekkers. The attacks which the Pedi experienced and survived - though narrowly - at this stage, amply demonstrate the effectiveness of the limited number of firearms which they then had in their possession; particularly in the essentially defensive military strategy which they employed, which involved the ability to withstand long sieges in fortified strongholds. Equally, the opening of the diamond fields coincided with a period of mounting tension between the Pedi and the Z.A.R. which was to culminate in the attack launched on the Pedi by President Burgers in 1876.

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 30.9. 1864; Beinart, 'Joyini Inkomo', pp. 212-7.

[2] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 355-8. Throughout the documentary record observers and participants stress the crucial importance attached to acquiring firearms.

Aside from their military significance, guns were obviously equally important in hunting. Modern ethnographers tend to project the current absence of hunting in the area into the past. The documentary record suggests a very different picture. The cattle losses which the Pedi experienced in the 1820s presumably increased the importance of hunting and by 1836 they lived 'chiefly by the chase, on millet and on beans'.[1] The gradual reaccumulation of cattle reduced this dependence on the hunt, but in accounts of the region in the 1860s hunting is given an equal prominence with agriculture and cattle-keeping as constituting the economic basis of local societies. Apart from playing an important part in day-to-day subsistence, and being critical at times of crop failure, skins, horns, feathers and ivory were important trade-goods. Thus, given the problems and cost of acquiring ammunition, it was probably in hunting for trading purposes - if such a distinction can be made - that guns were most important. It is clear that individuals within the society gained prominence specifically in the role of hunters. The fascinating life story of Jakob Makoetle is a case in point. He does not appear to have been born of high rank. Having secured a gun operated as a hunter in the area round the Steelpoort River, where, because of the prevalence of tsetse fly, big game still abounded. He appears to have hunted with a group of followers; but just what the composition of this group was, is unfortunately not clear. His greatest feat was to shoot five elephants in one day, and he became 'the favourite of King Sekhukhune'.[2] In the long run, however, the twin processes of cattle accumulation and the eradication of game in and around the Pedi domain reduced the importance of hunting.

---

[1] Arbousset, Narrative, p. 172.

[2] Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 184-202, in particular; p. 195; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 120-22; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 35; Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg', pp. 32-8; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 174-5.

The Pedi acquisition of firearms increased their military and hunting potential, but it probably hastened the eradication of game while the society also became dependent on a changing technology that it could not reproduce. In order to retain the advantages which the possession of firearms afforded, especially in military terms, the Pedi were forced to attempt to keep pace with changes in gun technology. Although they were extensively armed by the 1860s, Pedi firearms were largely old muskets or elephant guns. The arms trade in Griqualand West, while dealing in the usual selection of obsolete and decrepit firearms, also made available more modern rifles, and Merensky suggests that the Pedi made use of this to re-arm extensively, trading off their older firearms to groups to the north of them.[1]

However, while the demand within the society for firearms was clearly an important factor, the problem remains of why the Pedi adopted labour migration as the means to secure them. The demand for guns which was widespread amongst African societies in southern Africa did not lead automatically to labour migrancy. The Mpondo, Swazi, Zulu and southern Sotho, for example, acquired substantial numbers of guns through trade. The explanation for Pedi migrancy must, therefore, be partially sought in changing patterns of trade and the degree to which the society had access to viable markets for its products.[2]

During Sekwati's reign, the Pedi continued to be linked to the east coast through Tsonga intermediaries who travelled to and settled amongst them. In 1836 Arbousset described the 'collars and bracelets of blue, red and yellow beads of Portuguese manufacture', worn by his Pedi informants. These Pedi also described the role of Tsonga traders who

---

1 Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 30 and 293.

2 See, for example, W. Beinart, 'Economic change in Pondoland in the nineteenth century', I.C.S., S.A. Seminar 7, 1975, pp. 26-40. Atmore and Sanders, 'Sotho Arms'.

> ...procure copper, beads and stuffs at Laurent Marques, [sic] and go to exchange these for ivory, horns, cattle and furs in the interior. It is from them for example, that Sekuate has purchased the red scarf with which he is said to deck himself on fete days.[1]

The Pedi also had some dealings with the Portuguese traders who settled in the eastern Transvaal.

A trade in the products of the hunt and in iron goods also continued with African societies in the interior into the 1850s and 1860s. The 'Baperis' that Arbousset encountered had brought skins with them, and a party which left the Pedi domain in 1862 to travel to Mshweshwe's kingdom carried kirris made from rhino horn, and riding whips made from hippo and rhino skins to trade with the Southern Sotho. There also appears to have been a virile trade in metal goods. Arbousset commented of the Pedi, 'Iron abounds in their country. The natives forge out of it pickaxes twice as heavy as those of other Bechuana and Caffer tribes that we have known and twice as good',[2] The Pedi did produce their own iron goods but the 'Barroka' who lived in the eastern foothills of the escarpment, and the Phalaborwa and other lowveld groups were the dominant iron workers in the north-eastern Transvaal in the mid-years of the nineteenth century. In 1862, Merensky and Nachtigal made an exploratory tour to the north of the Pedi domain and witnessed the production of metal hoes, axes, spears, arrow points and ornaments of various kinds which Nachtigal believed to be of superior quality to average goods of British manufacture. Extensive trade was conducted in these items, according to Merensky; for example, many war axes passed through the Pedi domain en route to Mshweshwe's land each year, and the party which set out for there in 1862 carried axes as presents for the Sotho king. The

---

[1] Arbousset, Narrative, p. 170; see also p. 180.

[2] Ibid., p. 175, see also pp. 173-4; B.M.B., 1862, pp. 95-6.

new Pedi polity, however, was not, even at the height of its powers in the 1870s, in a position to dominate trade routes in the way that its predecessor had during the reigns of Thulare and Malekutu. Equally importantly, the increasing penetration of the interior by traders operating from the Cape and Natal considerably reduced the importance of the older trade routes which had run from east to west and north to south.[1]

In the case of the links with the southern Sotho, the 1850s and 1860s witnessed the transformation of a trade route into a labour route, although its trading aspect was initially not lost and was perhaps even boosted. This casts some light on the suggestion that 'labour-migration reveals many structural similarities with raiding and long distance trading' and that with their decline 'a form of culture transfer in favour of migrant labour occurred'.[2] The Pedi case suggests the rather more mundane point that pre-existing long distance trading networks carried information about the demands and rewards for labour and facilitated the early movement of men to places of employment.

It was large-scale trade in cattle and grain for colonial markets which played a key role in the acquisition of fire-arms by the southern Sotho and the Mpondo. The missionaries who settled in the Pedi domain in the 1860s commented on the luxuriant fields which extended far into the plains around the Leolu mountains. In good years, these lands produced substantial surpluses of grain which were readily traded, with 200 kilos of sorghum exchanged for as little as a single iron hoe. The capriciousness of the climate ensured, however, that the missionary

---

1 Merensky, Beiträge, p. 106; Wangemann, Die Berliner Mission, p. 65; B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/2, Reise Tagebuch, 14.8.1862.

2 G. Clarence-Smith and R. Moorsom, 'Underdevelopment and class formation in Ovamboland, 1844-1917', Palmer and Parsons (eds.) Roots, p. 107.

record also bristled with complaints relating to the absence or insufficiency of rain during critical phases of the agricultural cycle. And even in good years Pedi producers had no accessible or viable markets for their crops. Some trade in grain existed between Boer and Pedi society but the basic similarity of their products ensured that exchange, in the main, was restricted to evening-out inequalities of production. The distance of the Lydenburg district from colonial markets, and the difficulties and high costs of transport ruled out the large-scale export of grain to Boer and Pedi alike.[1]

Cattle could walk to market but could, nonetheless, be secured from societies situated closer to the principal markets. In any event, it appears unlikely that the Pedi ever accumulated sufficient cattle to participate in the cattle trade to the extent that the Mpondo did. The drive remained towards restoring and expanding herds. R. James, for example, armed with his experience of trading cattle from the Mpondo, set out to replicate this trade in the Lydenburg area in 1872 but discovered 'The natives in those days all wanted young cattle. I had men trading in Swaziland for cattle which we then sold to the Basuto tribes' (that is, northern Sotho).[2] According to Merensky, the opening of the diamond fields led to the widespread purchase of cattle from white farmers of the Lydenburg area by Pedi and others returning from the diggings.[3]

Trade in the Transvaal was also hedged round by restrictions. The Trekkers' attempts to establish and maintain a monopoly of fire-arms led

---

1 Palmer and Parsons, 'Introduction', Roots, pp. 20-22; Beinart, 'Economic change', pp. 29-31; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 95-6, 179; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 38, 42, 67 and 173, for example.

2 University of Witwatersrand, Church of the Province Library, A.55, R.T.A. James, 'The Diary of Trader James', p. 4.

3 Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 290.

to prohibitions on Africans owning guns or horses, and trading in these items to Africans was declared illegal. These restrictions were consistently flouted by Boer and African alike, but attempts were made to enforce them, particularly in the case of traders from the Cape and Natal. The hazards of smuggling inflated the cost of guns and helped to ensure that it was initially only ivory and later cash and diamonds which provided sufficient incentive and return to make the trade an attractive proposition. The amount of ivory which the Pedi could secure declined with the eradication of elephant in and around the Pedi domain, and more generally in the eastern lowveld. As the focus of the ivory trade moved to the Zoutpansberg, the Pedi polity was increasingly by-passed, and as the hunting frontier moved north, the opportunities were reduced for Pedi to temporarily or permanently acquire guns through collaboration with Boer hunters. By the second half of the 1850s, this dwindling supply of ivory had led to a marked down-turn in the trade from the eastern Transvaal. Some trade in ivory was however to continue until the late 1860s.[1]

Given the hazards, distances and commodities involved, trade was thus unlikely to have led to the widespread accumulation of fire-arms which the Pedi achieved through migrancy. Chiefs, through their control over organizational requirements of hunting, and through rights to tribute, held a partial monopoly of the ivory trade. Therefore, the extent to which guns were diffused through the society as a consequence of trade in ivory, partly depended on how far chiefs chose to distribute them amongst their subjects. It was also, presumably, only chiefs and the relatively few others with considerable heads of cattle who would

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 96; Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg', pp. 32-8; T.A. SS, R 938/67, Landdros Lydenburg to Uitvoerende Raad 7.9.1867; T.A. L. 1, Volksraad Notule, July 1857. Art 31, University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province Library, R.T.A. James, 'The Diary of Trader James', p. 2.

have been willing or able to trade cattle against guns. It would seem that the cash demanded by traders in return for guns by the late 1860s, came at least in part from tribute made to chiefs by returning migrants. Where external enemies were less threatening, chiefs may have attempted to retain control over the firearms introduced into their society, but in the turbulent Transvaal it was in the interests of both chiefs and subjects that guns should be as widely distributed as possible, and, short of a massive investment of chiefly resources, migrant labour was the only way of achieving this end. To some extent, the control over the use of firearms was retained by chiefs, through their accumulation of stores of ammunition which were distributed amongst subjects only in the event of military action and perhaps large-scale hunts. Chiefly resources were also invested in the purchase of superior arms, which were loaned or given to favoured subjects.[1]

The accumulation of cash through migrancy, and mainly rumoured but partly real riches in diamonds brought back from the diggings by migrants, gave added incentive to the arms trade in the early 1870s. Pedi migrants could, however, get cheaper and better guns in the environs of Kimberley than smugglers from either Delagoa Bay or the British colonies were able to supply, and the trade remained of secondary importance in the supply of rifles but assisted the paramount and others to restock supplies of ammunition. The most dramatic manifestations of the trade in this period were a number of attempts to smuggle an item which migrants could not readily purchase or transport and which required a substantial investment of chiefly resources to procure - a cannon. The Pedi regiments observed mercenary cannoneers in operation with Boer forces in the 1860s and were

---

[1] Interview, Mothubatse, 8.11.1976; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 569, n.d.; C. 2482, No. 158, Statement of Tamakana, 26.10.1879 and see below.

sufficiently impressed with their weapons to persuade Sekhukhune to make a number of attempts to either construct or purchase a cannon. The various endeavours to transport a cannon to the Pedi domain in the early 1870s were, however, probably encouraged as much by the fabled wealth in diamonds and sterling of the paramount as by Sekhukhune's direct initiative. None of these attempts was successful, many were mythical, and some verged on the farcical. Probably the best example of the latter was the attempt by Herbert Rhodes (elder brother to Cecil and member of the Volksraad for Pilgrim's Rest) to smuggle a brass cannon he had bought from the English ship, Pelham, from Delagoa Bay up the Matolla river to the Transvaal. His venture fell foul of the Portuguese authorities who were intent on improving their relationship with the Z.A.R. and Rhodes was forced to scupper his cannon, boat and parliamentary career.[1]

Rhodes and a number of more successful arms traders were members of the community which formed with the opening of the alluvial gold fields in the eastern and northern Transvaal after 1873. The development of these fields caused a regional economic transformation by creating new demands and markets for labour and grain. However, while some Pedi responded to this local demand for labour, on the whole the white miners were compelled to secure most of their labour from other sources. There was virtually an open arms trade on the gold fields which had the sanction of President Burgers and the probable reason for the reluctance of the Pedi to work on them stemmed from the lower rates of pay and higher cost and inferior quality of arms available there. Grain prices

---

[1] B.M.B., 1882, pp. 56-7; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 174; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 188-98; J.C. Otto, 'Sekoekoeni en die Handel in Vuurwapens', Historiese Studies, 5, 3(1944), pp. 161-74; C.505, No. 19, Declaration of Chief Sekukuni to H.C. Shepstone, 10.12.1879.

in the eastern Transvaal soared, but while the Pedi did trade some grain - particularly for ammunition - exchange was not on a large scale. The reasons for this stemmed in part from the fact that the opening of both the gold and diamond fields coincided with a period of mounting pressure on resources within the Pedi domain which militated against the large-scale production and sale of grain.[1]

The absence of anything resembling accurate population figures for the area makes speculation about population increase hazardous at best, but it does appear likely that there was a steady build-up of population in the Pedi domain. Aside from any natural increase, the numbers were swelled by the constant influx of refugees. By the early 1870s, there is evidence that a perception of land shortage existed within the society which was reflected in the movement of groups out of the heartland of the polity. Thus the relative security from exaction and attack afforded by residence within the Pedi domain had probably encouraged settlement in marginal agricultural areas by the 1870s. Although it is unlikely that there was an absolute shortage of arable land, it is possible that there was mounting pressure on better quality soils, and increasing difficulty in securing the combination of agricultural and pastoral resources favoured by the Pedi producers. While the preferred soils were black peat or turf and red clay, when those were fully subscribed or exhausted, less fertile soil had to be used. Thus, the 1870s may well have seen the Pedi being increasingly forced to utilize lands of poorer quality with resultingly reduced yields.[2]

---

1 H.T. Glynn, Game and Gold: Memories of Over Fifty Years in the Lydenburg District (London, 1938), p. 100; T.A., E.V.R., 220, Petition, J.A. Erasmus and 38 others, 26.4.1873; T.A. LL.4 State Secretary to Jansen, 3.10.1873; SS 207, R 893, Scoble to State Secretary, 24.4.1876.

2 B.M.B., 1862, p. 365; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 27; T.A., SS 187 R 807, Nachtigal to Landdros of Lydenburg, 13.4.1875; E.V.R., 220, Petition, de Villiers and 41 others, April 1875; SS 189 R 1351, Schoeman to State Secretary, 22.6.1875; SN 3 40/80, Schultze to Shepstone, 2.2.1880.

The vulnerability of the Pedi to drought may also have been increased by the introduction of maize, a crop less drought-resistant than the sorghums and millets that had been the dominant cereals cultivated earlier. Arbousset's informants at Moriah in 1836 told him that maize was not grown in the Pedi area. Although it had been experimented with, it was abandoned in the face of chiefly disapproval. By the beginning of the 1860s, some maize was being grown, but it does not seem to have challenged the dominant position of the older crops. The mid-1860s witnessed the further spread of maize cultivation, but its extent is not clear. The increased planting of maize may have represented a response to population increase. From 1869-77 the Pedi experienced a number of years in which inadequate rainfall and locust swarms, presumably in combination with the factors outlined above, resulted in short-falls of grain. In 1869, Nachtigal reported that in order to preserve grain stores, beer-brewing had ceased. In 1870 he reported widespread hunger and in 1872 Sekhukhune made the same complaint. The picture for the years 1873 to 1875 is not clear, but in 1876, 1877 and 1878, as a result of poor rains and the ravages of war, the Pedi were forced to import large quantities of grain, in part in exchange for cattle. In these years, not only were grain crops inadequate to sustain large-scale trade, but the need to secure the subsistence of their families may have played an increasingly important part in propelling men on to the labour market.[1]

Quite apart from ecological pressures, the rulers of the Pedi polity appear to have played a critical role in the initiation and control of the kind of movement of men to the south which existed by the 1860s and 1870s. The Pedi had rapidly discovered that the Trekker monopoly of fire-arms, so attractive in alliance, was costly in the event of a

---

[1] Arbousset, Narrative, p. 172; B.M.B., 1862, p. 366; B.M.B., 1865, p. 215; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 807, 905 and 928.

dispute. Pedi informants told Merensky in 1861 that Sekwati saw the large-scale importation of guns as the main way to resist the Boers (and, no doubt, other African societies as well). Traditions also recall that Sekwati while still resident at Phiring sent out three regiments, two to the Cape and one to Delagoa Bay, and that they returned with fire-arms. The missionary record in the 1860s also suggests that elements of regimental organisation were being utilized. Migrants almost always left the area in organized groups which could comprise two hundred men or more. Some men of high rank travelled with these parties and the fact that men travelled south shortly after initiation also points to the importance of age-set organization to the early history of Pedi migrancy. The 1850s and 1860s, therefore, witnessed the paramount extending and putting to new use his control over regimental labour which had previously played a central role in his ability to dominate trade. In the 1860s, Sekhukhune also prevented unauthorized individuals departing for the Cape Colony and toyed at one point with the idea of recalling migrants. In 1877, he referred in conversation with British officials, to men he had 'sent out' to work.[1]

In this process of labour migration to white enterprise, the southern Sotho ruler Mshweshwe clearly played a key role in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s. Moreover, the power of both the Pedi paramount and the Sotho king over this system was enhanced by their position as rulers of major and independent domains bordering on areas of white control which were, therefore, important corridors of movement. This was a situation which they could and did exploit to their material and political advantage.

---

[1] C. 1883, No. 22, Clarke to Shepstone, 13.6.1877; B.M.B., 1862, p. 255, 347; B.M.A. Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 6.10.1861 and 17.10.1861; Abt 2, Fach 3/1, Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 20.10.1861.

Pedi passing through the southern Sotho area had to labour in Mshweshwe's lands before he would grant them a permit to proceed into the Colony. On their return journey, Mshweshwe claimed 'the right to take the chief's portion out of their earnings, and this invariably consisted of munitions of war'.[1] The extent to which these obligations were enforced is unclear, however, and it seems likely that they were reduced by alternative tribute payments and through diplomacy. It seems that Mshweshwe and Sekwati reached some kind of agreement and there is the suggestion that this was consolidated and given institutional expression by ties of marriage. The importance of the Sotho king in Sekhukhune's view of the political dispensation in southern Africa in the early 1860s was reflected in the two letters he despatched on his accession. One went to Lydenburg, the other to Mshweshwe. Maletsul, who carried the letter south, subsequently returned with two sons of the Sotho king who were feted and entertained to military displays by the paramount and who were accompanied on their departure by a large party of Pedi migrants. Presumably part of the purpose of the letter and the visit was to renew the arrangement regarding the flow of men and arms and thus to keep open a vital life-line to the Pedi polity.[2]

The Pedi paramount also benefited from tribute from men passing through his domain en route to and from the Cape and Natal. Much more important, however, were the tribute payments he received from Pedi migrants on their return to their homeland. By the 1870s, chiefs received in the region of £1 from each man. They had the right to examine the bags of goods with which migrants returned, and to select choice items for themselves. They could also claim the first calf from a cow earned through migrancy.

---

[1] Atmore and Sanders, 'Sotho Arms', p. 538.

[2] Ibid.; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 84; B.M.B., 1862, pp. 253-4, 255.

On occasion, the paramount also received diamonds in tribute which had been secured by his subjects in Griqualand-West. By 1862, the paramount had considerable quantities of cloth and blankets in his possession as well as his own arsenal.[1]

It was not only chiefs who made demands on migrants' earnings. Kgoro and household heads also sought to establish and enforce rights to migrants' wages. Their attempts to achieve this end were assisted by a number of factors. Unmarried men were barred from holding cattle in their own right. While some of the cattle transferred in bridewealth payments may have been secured through the groom's earnings, these nonetheless had to be supplemented by beasts from the herds of his senior male kin. Migrants were dependent on the established relationships of authority in the society for their access to cattle, women and land. Nonetheless, while rights over stock were clearly established (and perhaps even extended) in the early period of migrancy, those relating to cash and manufactured goods were not. Wages were also earned outside the society and could be spent outside it, and both factorsmay have led some household heads to encourage dependents to undertake employment directly rewarded by payment in stock. All these rights, however, were defined and re-defined as the century progressed and as relationships of power and authority within kgoro and households were transformed.[2]

There is evidence from the 1860s which suggests that conflicts could arise even where wages were paid in, or converted into, stock. The missionary Endemann, illustrating the 'despotism' which ruled in Pedi society, described one such dispute which highlights a number of the points made above:

---

1 Merensky, Beiträge, p. 106; B.M.B., 1882, p. 56; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 130-32; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 30.9.1864.

2 For a fuller discussion of these processes, see Beinart and Delius, 'The Family'.

> The elder brother of Johannes came to take the heifer which he (Johannes) had received as payment. Among the Basotho the father receives everything which his children earn until they start their own herd. After the death of the "father" this right devolves onto the first born ... In accordance with these rights (or unrights) the brother of Johannes, now his father, had already taken into his possession the first heifer which Johannes earned ... Now he also wished to take the second in order to take a second wife and later exchange ... the daughters he hoped for and so eventually become a large cattle owner. This he (Johannes's brother) gave himself as his ambition. Certainly the "father" has the duty to secure the "child" a wife ... [however] ... even if the "child" has given the "father" everything, he must still wait until the latter is prepared to provide the necessary cattle for his marriage. In the example under consideration the elder brother ... is not rich in cattle but poor. If he now takes both heifers from Johannes and buys himself a second wife, there is little prospect that Johannes will be able to marry, even though he is old enough to do so.

Endemann, however, intervened and kept the heifer on behalf of Johannes.[1]

The society's control over migrants did not cease at the borders of the polity. The control of the paramount extended to areas in which Pedi found employment by means additional to regimental organization. On a visit to Port Elizabeth, Nachtigal found a community of Pedi living on Hospital Hill. Prominent in this community was Morutane, a brother of Sekhukhune who sent gifts back to the paramount and who despatched letters to him through the missionaries. At the diamond fields, J.B. Curry commented that some chiefs had unofficially accredited ministers who kept them informed by returning parties of what was going on amongst their men working on the diggings. Sekhukhune had at least two men - Mamaree and Timian - acting in this capacity on the fields. Mamaree was probably the man known by the missionaries as Mamaricha and by the Boers as Windvogel. He was Sekhukhune's brother and prominent in Pedi politics through the 1860s and 1870s.[2]

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 30.9.1864.

[2] U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 218, 4.11.1865; p. 278, 14.8.1865; Siebörger, 'Recruitment', p. 31; C.A., G.L.W., 184, Southey to Barkly, 6.3.1875.

The demand for labour which existed at the diamond fields gave rise to a number of attempts at labour recruitment, and the Pedi were a favoured target. The method of recuitment revolved, to a considerable extent, around enlisting the aid of chiefs. Prominent amongst the recruiters was one J. Edwards, who had previously traded in the Pedi area, and who, in 1873, concluded an agreement with Sekhukhune by which the latter agreed to supply 'constant labour to the fields at current wages'.[1] After the negotiations were completed, Edwards set off for the fields accompanied by 47 of Sekhukhune's subjects. Although chiefly power was an important factor in Pedi labour migration, it is unlikely that the levels of coercion involved were high. Apart from the incentives of new commodities, cattle and perhaps - by the 1870s - the relief of pressure on grain supplies, if labour migration was an accepted norm by the 1860s as Merensky suggests, this was presumably even more true by the 1870s, and it was in this context that chiefly powers of persuasion were applied. Indeed, it seems that by this decade, the acquisition of a gun had become incorporated as an essential part of the transition from being a 'youth' to being an adult male and was partly clothed in the symbolism of the rituals of transition which marked off different statuses within the society.[2]

It is not only in terms of recruitment that the 1873 agreement between Sekhukhune and Edwards is of interest. It also reveals an intriguing attempt on the part of the paramountcy to tighten its control over Pedi migrants. In the agreement, it was laid down that 'Each man was to be contracted for six months at the current wages

---

[1] C.A. G.L.W. 17, Memo. of an agreement made by Mr. John Edwards with Sekukuni, paramount chief of Sequatis people, 13.8.1873, and Receipt from M. Skinner, Landdros, Pretoria, 11.9.1873.

[2] Ibid.; B.M.B., 1882, pp. 46-57.

payable ... £1 to be paid by the employer as royalty to Mamaree and Timian ... the amount as royalty ... to be deducted from wages'. Further, no man was to 'receive a permit for a gun without the sanction of Mamaree and Timian and not until after the royalty has been paid'.[1] The number of Sekhukhune's subjects on the fields, and hence subject to the agreement was calculated at 'about three thousand'. In practice, the agreement broke down because it failed to secure the support of Robert Southey, Lieutenant Governor of Griqualand West, who saw it, quite rightly, as being designed to 'squeeze £1 each out of every labourer of the tribe'.[2] This agreement marks a clear attempt on the part of the paramount to entrench his control over the earnings of migrants and possibly also to increase the proportion of their earnings which accrued to him. But perhaps more importantly still, it raises a number of questions concerning the nature of the relationship between the paramountcy and subordinate chiefdoms.

Although Sekwati and subsequently Sekhukhune exercised control over the movement of men from the capital and its environs, and secured tribute from them on their return, the more powerful of the subordinate chiefdoms, while responsive to overall direction to the paramount, exercised similar control over the men who lived within their regional spheres of authority. Moreover, men from chiefdoms on the periphery of the domain of the Pedi polity would in the normal course of events have experienced little in the way of direct control or exaction by the Maroteng. If the paramount had established his right to a portion of the income of all the labourers who fell under the general appellation of 'Sekukuni Basutos' which was employed on the diamond fields, the

---

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., and C.A. G.L.W., 184, Southey to Barkly, 8.3.1875.

income which accrued to him in consequence of the involvement of Pedi in migrant labour would have been massively increased. If the agreement had been fully impelemented it may well have marked an important turning point in the relationship between the Maroteng and their subject chiefdoms, with the paramountcy acquiring a degree of control by alliance with colonial authorities which its internal resources of power could not provide. A proper understanding of the context of this agreement, therefore, demands an examination of the wider struggles being waged within the polity.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERNAL POLITICAL PROCESS AND EXTERNAL POLITICAL RELATIONS

PART ONE

The Succession to the Paramountcy - the Death of Sekwati

On the twentieth of September 1861, the B.M.S. missionary Alexander Merensky was disturbed, and probably more than a little alarmed, by the sound of high-noted, shrill and continuous women's wailing which arose from the neighbouring village of Mametsi. His colleague, Albert Nachtigal, summoned by Chief Kabu on account of his medical rather than his ritual skills, found, to his chagrin, that the chief had not waited for his ministrations but had hastened instead to the capital.[1] Both incidents had a single cause. On that day Sekwati died.

At the capital, preparations were made for the burial of the paramount and the recognition of his successor. Sekwati's body was bound in a foetal position, wrapped in the skin of a black bull which had been specially slaughtered and then buried in the cattle kraal at Thaba Mosego. Sekhukhune, Sekwati's eldest son, had been forewarned of his father's death by his mother Thorometsane and hurried to the capital. The strength of his position and the force of his claim to succession to the highest office was symbolized and proclaimed by the fact that he presided over the burial of his father. From 24 September, the heads of families and subordinate chiefdoms made their way to Thaba Mosego driving cattle to hloboga (sympathise) with the royal kgoro by presenting a beast. The herds of cattle of the deceased paramount were paraded before the mourners and Sekhukhune challenged anyone to dispute his right to take them into his control.[2] None was prepared to take up this challenge. On 30 September,

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, pp. 94-5.

2 Ibid.; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 128-9; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 83-4; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 24.9.1861.

Mamaricha arrived at Merensky's mission station, with a request that the missionaries should draft and despatch a letter to the Landdros of Lydenburg and to Mshweshwe to inform them that Sekwati had not been poisoned but had died of 'infirmity and old age' and that 'Sekhukhune was now the King of the Pedi in his place'. Thus far, the succession has passed off surprisingly smoothly.[1]

The Disputes

This brief account of the death of Sekwati and the succession of Sekhukhune is based almost exclusively on contemporary evidence and it differs in substance and detail from the later oral and written accounts which have come to dominate the understanding of these events. The succession and the disputes which it triggered are central to almost all the historical accounts which deal with the period.[2] The main sources used in existing depictions are oral traditions collected in this century and the picture presented is a testament to the distortions to which political traditions are prone. Only those contenders whose descendants still hold positions of power and authority in the area are remembered. The two contenders who are recalled are presented as having immediately and inevitably come into conflict. Harries writes, 'When Sekwati died, his two sons Sekhukhune and Mampuru opposed each other over the spot where their late sire was to be buried', while Mönnig asserts, in contradiction to some of his own evidence, that Sekhukhune exhumed the body of his father, which had previously been buried by Mampuru who had thus established his prior claim, re-interred the chief

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, pp. 95-6.

2 H.P. Van Coller, 'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapeditroon', Historiese Studies, III, 3, 4(1942), pp. 97-100; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 100-101; Hunt, 'Account', pp. 292-5; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 25-7; Harries, Laws and Customs, III.

and enforced his claim with the backing of his regiment.[1] Chiefdoms ruled by the descendants of these two brothers continue to play a vital role in the modern political dispensation, and historical traditions collected in the Pedi area in 1976 cast much of the history of the latter half of the nineteenth century - including wars between the Pedi and the Boers, British and Swazi - into an explanatory framework constituted from the conflicts between these contenders for the paramountcy.

The historical accounts, however, reveal a more profound misunderstanding of the nature of political process within the society. The assumption that permeates these descriptions is that the rules of succession should have determined the succession. Relatively clear cut rules existed. Notionally, Sekwati should have been followed by the eldest son of his chief wife; failing that, a regent should have been appointed for a minor heir or a secondary rule of succession should have been applied. It is against the background of these rules that the conflicts which developed are examined, with the emphasis falling on the rank of the rival contenders. However, the work of Comaroff, on both historical and contemporary succession to office among the Tshidi Baralong, has demonstrated that succession disputes were not a breach of political norms and that the existence of a relatively straightforward set of rules does not necessarily mean that succession was a clear-cut matter. Indeed, he argues,

> The opposite is true, they permit manipulations and legitimization of rival claims ... Genealogical argument may provide the terms in which rival claims are debated, but actual outcomes depend upon the processes of competition for support and on the ability of politicians to mobilize followers. In this sense, ascription and achievement are not conflicting principles but describe two levels of one reality.[2]

---

[1] Harries, Laws and Customs, III; Mönnig, The Pedi, pp. 26 and 264.

[2] J. Comaroff, 'Chiefship in a South African Homeland', Journal of Southern African Studies, 1, 1 (1974), pp. 38 and 40.

It is with these strictures in mind that an account is given of the succession of Sekhukhune in 1861 and the conflicts consequent upon it.

It is worth recalling at the outset that the Pedi polity was in the process of reformation after the devastations of the difaqane. While Sekwati had successfully stamped his authority on the area, he had not completely extinguished the claims of all rivals. Some of these claims to office were, like his own, legitimized by reference to descent from Thulare. There was thus an ambiguity in the formal basis for Sekwati's authority, for as the son of a relatively junior wife, his claims to legitimacy could be turned against him by those who claimed descent from a wife senior to his mother. The possibilities for manipulation were thus multiplied by the discontinuities in rank and authority occasioned by the collapse of the Pedi polity and the death of a number of Thulare's senior sons. In effect, the system and relationships of rank which had characterised the pre-difaqane Pedi polity constituted the terms in which claims to power and authority were made and debated in the new political system which emerged in the 1830s under Sekwati.

Sekhukhune was the eldest son of Thorometsane, the first wife married by Sekwati. He was born during the reign of Thulare at the apogee of Pedi power and prestige. On Thulare's death in 1820 he was old enough to be tending his father's flocks of sheep. Over forty years later he described to Nachtigal the eclipse that occurred on the day of his grandfather's death. He recalled that, as the sky darkened, overcome with fear, he drove his flock back to the capital only to discover that the paramount had died. The fact that he was herding sheep rather than cattle suggests that he was in his early adolescence. However, he underwent the first stage of male initiation - the bodika -

during the brief reign of Phetedi, before the Pedi polity was engulfed by the difaqane. Mojalodi, Phetedi's son, attended the same bodika as Sekhukhune, and as he was a senior son of the incumbent paramount, was its leader. The second stage of initiation, however, took place in Tlokwa country after the defeat of the polity, the death of Phetedi and the flight of Sekwati. Sekhukhune's late adolescence was thus shaped by Sekwati's raiding career in the northern Transvaal.[1]

Mojalodi, however, remained in the Pedi heartland and marshalled the remnants of the Maroteng before being absorbed into the following of Kgabe, the son of Makgeru. On Sekwati's return and after his defeat of Marangrang and Kgabe, Mojalodi was incorporated into his following and vied with Sekhukhune for leadership of the Matuba regiment which had been formed from their initiation group. Whereas the childhood of these men had been spent in the security and prosperity of Thulare's capital in the Steelpoort River valley, they had, in early adolescence, witnessed the fratricidal strife and the invasion of the Pedi domain which followed their grandfather's death. Their early adulthood was shaped by the rigours of survival in a world both devastated and transformed by the difaqane.[2]

Both men achieved prominence as military leaders. They feature in the first recorded Pedi accounts of the combined Boer and Pedi raid against Moletse in 1847 and played a central role in the agitation against the fact that their regiments were expected to bear the brunt of the fighting but were denied an equitable share of the spoils by the Boers. In 1850, during the Zulu assault on Phiring, Sekhukhune and Mojalodi led the counter-attack which repulsed the invaders. In 1852 they planned

---

1 Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 138; Bothma, 'Political structure', pp. 177-84, 192-3; B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 28.10.1861; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 594-5, 25.5.1869.

2 Ramaila, Setlogo, p. 46; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 227.

and executed the sortie which defeated the attempts of the Boers to cut Phiring off from its water supply and thus force Sekwati into submission. By the early 1850s, Mojalodi and Sekhukhune had emerged as military leaders with considerable reputations and probably with considerable personal followings.[1]

During the decade which followed these battles, Sekhukhune succeeded in establishing a clear pre-eminence over Mojalodi, but his relationship with Sekwati became increasingly strained. Although the reasons for these developments remain unclear, it seems likely that Sekhukhune, by now middle-aged, chafed under the authority of his aging father. The conflict between the two men reached the point where Sekhukhune was forced to seek temporary refuge with his aunt Legolane, who held sway over the groups settled immediately to the south west of the Leolu Mountains. These disputes, along with the desire to escape his father's close attentions, probably also played a part in persuading Sekhukhune to move away from the new Maroteng capital at Thaba Mosego and establish his own village.[2] Sekhukhune used his absence from the capital to extend his influence amongst the subordinate chiefdoms and to build up his own following, directly and indirectly, by taking refugee groups under his patronage.

The best documented and, in the long term, most significant example of this strategy is the incorporation of a group of eastern Sotho and Swazi who settled in the Pedi domain in 1859. They came to the eastern Transvaal as the result of conflict between Mswati and his elder brother and regent Somcuba, which caused the latter to flee from Swaziland in 1849 and to seek refuge amongst the Lydenburg settlers. While living in the Lydenburg district, Somcuba managed to expand his following by incorporating groups of eastern Sotho, but nemesis, in the shape of

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 340-42, 354-5.

[2] Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 254.

Mswati's warriors, overtook him in 1855. After Somcuba's death, his son Musuthfo took over the leadership of the remnant of the group and in 1859, to avoid further Swazi attacks and to evade Boer exactions, moved north across the Steelpoort. It was Sekhukhune rather than Sekwati who took the group under his protection on their arrival in the Pedi heartland, and his patronage extended to allocating them land upon which to settle.[1] Sekhukhune, in fact, appears to have shielded them from the power of the paramount and so enabled Musuthfo to launch a series of raids into the Lydenburg district designed to coerce his recalcitrant followers into joining him or, failing that, to seize their stock. The Lydenburg authorities made a series of complaints to Sekwati on this score, but the paramount appears to have been unable to halt Musuthfo's activities. After the succession of Sekhukhune, however, these raids soon ceased.[2]

There is also clear evidence that a special relationship developed between Sekhukhune and Musuthfo. Once Sekhukhune had acceded to the paramountcy, this group acted as his personal bodyguard during battle and were called on to assist in internal conflicts where the loyalty of some members of the regiments may have been in doubt. In return, Musuthfo was allowed considerable autonomy of control and authority within his own chiefdom and appears to have had enhanced freedom of action on the wider political stage.[3] The link between this group and Sekhukhune also provides an additional demonstration of the way in which groups of refugees, devoid of established bonds of allegiance and dependence, were crucial to those attempting to expand their following.

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, p. 92.

2 T.A., L 13, Potgieter to Uitvoerende Raad, 10.1.1860; L 4, Uitvoerende Raad, Art 40, 30.3.1860; S.S., Suppl, Stukke 1861, Joubert to State Secretary 22.8.1861; LL 1, Merensky to Landdros, 25.9.1861, and Merensky to Landdros, 21.10.1861.

3 Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 96; B.M.B., 1862, pp. 260 and 364; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 126.

While Sekhukhune pursued his ambitions away from the capital, his younger brother Mampuru emerged as a contender for the succession. Mampuru's mother was Kgomomokatane of the Magakala chiefdom, who had been designated at the chief wife of Malekutu. She was not, however, formally installed in this capacity and Malekutu thus died without a designated heir. Sekwati, on his return to the eastern Transvaal took Kgomomokatane as a wife. The ambivalence of the basis of Sekwati's claim to legitimate authority could be resolved by this device, which enabled him to present his position as that of regent to the yet unborn son and heir of Malekutu. Thus Sekwati, rather than appearing to usurp the royal line, could be seen as sustaining it, and the dictates of rank could be brought into line with the realities of power. While the debates which have rumbled on through the years following the succession have focused in part on the question of whether Kgomomokatane had indeed been properly designated as Malekutu's chief wife, and on the biological rather than social parentage of Mamputu, this marriage needs to be rooted in a particular stage of Sekwati's struggle to establish his authority south of the Olifhants River and in the development of a new political system.[1] There is no evidence to suggest that the issue of the union would automatically or inevitably be designated as the heir. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that the matter remained formally undecided until the mid-1850s when Sekwati, probably in part because of his antagonisms with his eldest son, publicly declared his support for Mampuru by handing him the sefoka (royal war emblem) of Thulare, and further evidence of his preference for his younger son is provided by the fact that Mampuru's name features among the signatories to the 1857 treaty with the Lydenburg Republic. Mampuru's participation in these

---

[1] Hunt, 'Account', pp. 292-3; Mönnig, The Pedi, p. 25.

negotiations suggests both that he was being groomed for the succession and that Sekwati wished to make his intended heir known to the Lydenburg authorities.[1] The indications are, however, that while Mampuru basked in his father's favour, he remained lamentably unprepared to secure and enforce his claims on the death of the paramount. Conversely, Sekhukhune, excluded from the capital and royal favour, had developed an independent basis of support within the polity which enabled him to secure his succession and which ensured that Mampuru was in no position to contest his right to do so. Not only did Mampuru fail to challenge Sekhukhune's claims, but the evidence indicates that he and his elder brother co-operated to ensure rival claims were extinguished.

In October of 1861, Seboni - a brother of Sekwati - was killed during a visit to Thaba Mosego, and his village was subsequently attacked and destroyed. The reasons for his execution appear to have revolved around the fact that he had been part of Kgabe's following, and had previously challenged Sekwati's authority, as well as the existence of links between him and Mojalodi. Despite the fact that his role has been largely excised from the traditions available on this era of Pedi history, Mojalodi, by virtue of his descent from Pethedi and his military exploits, probably featured very nearly as prominently in Sekhukhune's fears as did Mampuru. Mojalodi also, no doubt, felt more than a little apprehensive as a result of his long history of rivalry with the new paramount. Whether or not Seboni's death was the result of a real challenge mounted by him against Sekhukhune - with, or on the behalf of Mojalodi - remains unclear, but Mojalodi was sufficiently alarmed by Seboni's death to flee his village near Maserumule's chiefdom. He

---

[1] Volkstem, 20.9.1882, letter from Nachtigal; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 254; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 131; T.A. L 13, Agreement between Sekwati and the Lydenburg Republic, 17.11.1857.

initially sought sanctuary in the mountains to the east of the Steelpoort River and launched a number of desultory raids on surrounding groups. Mampuru led the campaign to contain this threat and to root out Mojalodi's remaining supporters. Finally, Mojalodi settled in the domain of the Ndzundzu Ndebele and played some part in the tensions that developed between that chiefdom and the Pedi polity.[1]

Mampuru, although unable to prevent Sekhukhune's succession, was not entirely devoid of support. The core of his following were the men who had passed through initiation lodges with him at Phiring and who had been constituted into the Manala regiment under his leadership. As Sekwati's chosen heir he probably retained the support of those individuals whose positions had been dependent on the favour of his father and who suffered exclusion under Sekhukhune, and he was able to indulge their sense of grievance. Mampuru also had some support beyond the immediate environs of the capital, although its extent is unclear. One important, if somewhat ambivalent source of support was the Magakala chiefdom from which his mother originated. Those chiefs intent on increasing their independence of the paramountcy could also be expected to at least dally with his cause. While the missionaries, particularly in their later publications, refer to the widespread popularity of Mampuru, their reporting may well have reflected the predilections of their converts and themselves rather more accurately than popular sentiment. Mampuru in fact made a point of cultivating the friendship of the missionaries.[2]

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 101-5, 260; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 130; B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/2 Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 9.10.1861, 11.10.1861.

[2] B.M.B., 1863, p. 400; B.M.B., 1862, pp. 257, 364-6; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 130; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 72-3, 31.10.1862, 1.11.1862.

Once he had secured the succession, Sekhukhune - although he dealt vigorously with lesser contenders - adopted a markedly conciliatory policy towards Mampuru. He indicated his willingness to share his patrimony in cattle with him, and delegated significant responsibilities to him. No doubt Sekhukhune's attempts to incorporate and pacify Mampuru stemmed from his awareness of the extent of his brother's potential support and his desire to avoid either civil war or external intervention. His attitude was probably also shaped by his own memories of the fratricidal conflicts which had rent the polity in the aftermath of Thulare's death and which had left it weak and vulnerable to attack. These conflicts and the disruption of the social order which they represented had also come to constitute a basic explanation for the misfortunes which had befallen the society in the intervening years.[1]

Despite their initial co-operation and Sekhukhune's attempts at conciliation, the relationship between the brothers became increasingly strained. Mampuru appeared to be unwilling to subordinate his own ambitions to those of Sekhukhune and probably through a combination of aspiration and unease in relation to his future continued to marshall his own support. The breach between the brothers became manifest in 1862 in a dispute which both reflected and exacerbated their wider rivalry. At the centre of the dispute was Tlakale who had been given in tribute by the subordinate chief Moreane to Sekwati. The paramount had, however, allowed her to cohabit with Mampuru and a child had been born from their union. Authority over Tlakale along with Sekwati's other wives passed on his death to his successor, Sekhukhune, and while the latter was prepared to share his father's cattle, he was loath to permit any challenge to his control over royal wives. This conflict simmered on,

---

[1] B.M.A. Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlólu, 24.9.1861; B.M.B., 1862, p. 104; B.M.B., 1862, p. 331.

and encouraged an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and rumour. In late May or early June of 1862, Sekhukhune called a pitso at the capital during which he encouraged Mampuru to state his complaints, but the latter held his peace and a reconciliation seemed to have been effected. On 16 June, however, the news reached the missionaries that Mapuru had fled from the capital for unspecified reasons, and that Sekhukhune had called on Musuthfo's warriors to prevent him joining Mabhoga and Mojalodi. But their instructions were that he should not be killed, and Mampuru initially sheltered in the south-western reaches of the Leolu Mountains before finally taking refuge with Sekwati's sister, Legolane, who had previously protected Sekhukhune from the wrath of his father. While this appeared to be the final rupture, Mampuru did - briefly - return to the capital before finally settling with a small group of followers in August 1862, amongst the Magakala, north of the Oliphants River.[1]

Probably the most important aspect of the succession was that it was a crucial test of the extent to which the authority established by Sekwati could be retained within the Maroteng chiefdom after his death. A profound threat to the position of the re-established paramountcy was that the first succession would unleash the possibilities for conflict within both the royal group and the wider polity. By the latter half of 1862, however, the internal threat to Sekhukhune's position represented by Mojalodi and Mampuru appeared to have been largely extinguished. Given the latter's initial basis of support, the fact that within a year of the death of his father his cause attracted such limited support, was a testament to the extent to which Sekhukhune had entrenched his

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 362-73; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 130; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 131-5, 165-7.

own hold on power and had established himself as Sekwati's legitimate successor. It was not only the initial succession that passed off relatively smoothly. The accounts which suggest that the conflict between Mampuru and Sekhukhune was immediate, profound and divided the polity, are contradicted by contemporary sources which suggest that it was initially submerged, and that when it did surface, Sekhukhune contained it with marked ease. Indeed, the most remarkable aspect of Sekhukhune's first year in office was the low level of conflict and the success with which the Maroteng avoided the possibility that internal dissension would jeopardize their wider authority.[1]

In the short term, Sekhukhune's cautious and conciliatory treatment of Mampuru appeared to have reaped ample reward, but in the longer term, the paramount had many opportunites on which to rue his earlier restraint. Mampuru, after having fled the Pedi heartland, embarked on a peripatetic career amongst the chiefdoms on the periphery of Sekhukhune's domain, seeking both to encourage the ambitions of their rulers in support of his own and to manipulate the conflicts and disputes within the Pedi polity to his advantage. His sojourn in the Magakala chiefdom lasted until 1867 when he moved to join the missionaries and converts who had removed from the Pedi domain to Botsabelo mission station in the neighbourhood of Middelburg. His stay there was marred by disputes with his younger brother, Johannes Dinkwanyane, and with Merensky. Later the same year he moved once again and settled, as Mojalodi had before him, amongst the Ndzundza Ndebele. Mampuru had, for Sekhukhune at least, a disquieting ability to intertwine his own cause with the varying threats, both internal and external, to the paramount.[2]

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, p. 136.

2 Volkstem, 20.9.1882, letter from Nachtigal; B.M.B., 1863, p. 400; B.M.B., 1866, p. 219, B.M.B., 1868, p. 331; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, pp. 157 and 167.

Equally threatening to the position of Sekhukhune as the internal and external machinations of his rivals for the succession, was the possibility that the death of Sekwati would encourage subordinate chiefdoms to restrict, contest or reject the authority of the Maroteng. These struggles, while relatively subdued in the last years of Sekwati's rule, were far from resolved and re-emerged with added vigour in the climate of uncertainty which followed his death. A number of factors had shaped their course. The establishment of Boer settlement in the eastern Transvaal in 1845, and the extension of authority of the Z.A.R. resulted in the creation of overlapping areas of Maroteng and Z.A.R. rule. By the early 1860s, in the northern reaches of the Lydenburg district, a multiplicity of Koni, Tsonga and eastern Sotho groups lived under a loose dual hegemony. To the south-west of the Pedi heartland the Kopa under Boleu and the Ndzundza Ndebele under Mabhogo, who had earlier recognized Sekwati's paramountcy, had become subject to varying degrees of Boer control after 1845. Their dual subjection coupled with the obstacles to the Maroteng directly intervening in the Boer domain, and the growing strength of the Ndzundza chiefdom, encouraged Boleu and Mabhogo to reject the remnants of Maroteng authority. The death of Sekwati provided both with the opportunity to demonstrate their independence. The Kopa failed to deliver the appropriate tribute in cattle, and the Ndebele symbolized their rejection of Sekhukhune's rule even more clearly by ordering a daughter of Mabhogo given in tribute to Sekwati to return home.[1]

Nor were all the chiefdoms within the Pedi heartland reconciled to Maroteng rule. The group which appeared most threatening from Sekhukhune's perspective in the early 1860s was the Tau chiefdom of Masemola (known as

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 136-7; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 39; T.A. S.S. 56, R374/64, Merensky to Landdros of Lydenburg, 20.6.1864.

Magalies in contemporary documentation) which was ruled by chief Mabowe. Although the Masemola and the Maroteng had entered into an alliance on the return of Sekwati from the north, their initial co-operation had not endured, and Tau tradition claims that the growing intensity of conflict between the two groups influenced Sekwati's decision to leave Phiring in 1853. The support given by the Masemola to Sekwati's cause had also not prevented them from developing their own regional hegemony and from protecting their autonomy. While Mabowe did not emulate Boleu and Mabhogo by formally withdrawing recognition of the paramountcy on Sekwati's death, he does appear to have played some part in the conflicts which accompanied Sekhukhune's succession, possibly promoting the cause of Mojalodi, and thereafter seeking to minimize the effective authority of the new paramount over his chiefdom and region.[1]

Sekhukhune, while initially avoiding a direct challenge to the entrenched power of Mabowe, attempted to extend his direct control in the region under the sway of the Masemola. A succession conflict in the Phaala chiefdom provided him with one means of intervention and he gave his support to Nakaphala against his elder brother Makalapeng who had the support of the Masemola. In 1862, Sekhukhune mobilized the Pedi army, including the regiments from Masemola and Phaala, under the pretext of launching an attack on the Kopa. Once the army had massed, however, Sekhukhune kept the men from these two chiefdoms captive, while launching an attack against those Phaala who had resisted the claims of Nakaphala. Mabowe continued his resistance to the Maroteng despite this reverse and sought to widen his own basis of support within the polity. In 1865 Sekhukhune summoned the Pedi regiments once again, this time however with the open intention of proceeding against the Masemola and their allies, the Mphanama and the Tisana, whose regiments had assembled at Phiring.[2]

---

[1] Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 52-3, 54.

[2] Ibid., pp. 60-62; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 133-4; T.A., LL 2, 164, Merensky to Landdros of Lydenburg, 11.2.1865.

The conflict which followed is recalled within Tau tradition as Ntwa ya Lenyora ('the war of thirst'). A stalemate rapidly developed, with the Masemola and their allies sheltered within the fortifications of Phiring, and the Pedi army encamped below. The former Maroteng capital became the site of yet another long siege and once again the absence of water on the mountain became the most pressing threat to the defenders. Mabowe was not, however, able to emulate the example of Sekwati and Sekhukhune and regain control of the local water supply. He was thus eventually forced to sue for peace, and the Masemola, Mphanama and Tisane handed over three young women to symbolize and express both their desire for peace and their recognition of the authority of the paramountcy. While the siege of Phiring decimated the cattle herds of the Masemola and checked their open defiance of Sekhukhune, it did not put an end either to their regional authority or to their discontent with Maroteng rule. Both these factors were to have an important influence on the course of events in the 1870s.[1]

The siege of Phiring along with earlier battles - most notably the campaign against the Ndzundza Ndebele in 1863 described below - demonstrated another significant development for the balance of power within the polity. By the time of Sekwati's death, it is true that the Maroteng chiefdom was pre-eminent in rank, population and possession of firearms, but the same processes which had strengthened the paramountcy had, in some degree, strengthened the chiefdoms subordinate to it. This applied with most force to their capacity to withstand attack. Although few chiefdoms were in a position to mount an effective challenge to the overall authority of the Maroteng, the combined effects of the incorporation of population, the acquisition of fire-arms, and the development of

---

[1] Ramaila, Setlogo, pp. 54-5.

fortified strongholds, ensured that the paramountcy in turn could not lightly or easily impose its authority by military means on recalcitrant chiefdoms. The defensive strategy which the Maroteng had developed and refined in order to survive Swazi, Zulu and Trekker attacks, was employed against them with comparable success by the Ndzundza Ndebele and the Masemola. The Maroteng were as ill-equipped as their major enemies to keep armies in the field for long periods of time and thus to press stalemated sieges to decisive conclusions. The alternative of direct and costly attacks on fortified strongholds could have had dire consequences for the unity of the Pedi forces and would have provoked further resistance to Maroteng rule. The most marked initial effect of transformed military strategy and technology in this period was thus that defence became more efficient than attack.[1]

The mobilization of the Pedi army prior to the attack on the Phaala chiefdom in 1862, was not only, or even primarily, of importance in the context of the growing rift between the Maroteng and the Masemola. It was also a crucial test and demonstration of the authority of the new paramount after nine months of his rule and at a time when his conflict with Mampuru had surfaced in open dispute and had led to the flight of the latter from the capital. Sekhukhune's summons to the regiments to assemble had a double-edged potential. If a number of the major chiefdoms had failed to respond, his authority would have been openly flouted and Mampuru's claims enhanced. However, mobilization could also serve to isolate those chiefdoms wavering in their support and expose them to the risk that their recalcitrance would provoke the paramount into launching the regiments that had assembled against them in reprisal.[2]

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, pp. 97-8.

In the event, an army gathered which, according to the missionaries' estimates, numbered some 10,000 men. Aside from the Kopa and Ndzundza Ndebele, none of the major chiefdoms which had recognized Maroteng rule during Sekwati's reign withheld their regiments. Particularly significant was the arrival of 800 men from the Magakala chiefdom which had provided one possible source of support to Mampuru's claims and from which some assistance was rendered to him after his departure from Thaba Mosego in which he subsequently settled. While participation in the mobilization of the army by no means demonstrated unqualified support for the inucmbent paramount, or even his office (as the arrival of regiments from Magakala and Masemola shows), it did reveal the extent to which Sekhukhune's power was recognized and effective.[1] For Mampuru and his supporters sheltering to the west of the Leolu, the sight of the army steadily massing must have been both ominous and a clear indication that Sekhukhune's grip on the polity had not loosened.[2]

---

[1] B.M.B., 1862, pp. 367-70.

[2] Ibid., p. 369.

PART TWO

External Political Relations

A possibly equally ominous indication for the future of the polity was that the uncertainties of the interregnum and the conflicts consequent upon the succession would encourage intervention by the Z.A.R. or the Swazi kingdom. Sekhukhune was profoundly suspicious of Boer motives and intentions. There was also some cause to fear that sections of the Boer community could become embroiled in a contested succession. However, the Z.A.R., suffering from internal divisions and struggling vainly to impose its authority on the relatively small Kopa and Ndzundza Ndebele chiefdoms posed little direct military threat to the Pedi polity.[1] The major Pedi fear was that the Z.A.R. would either encourage, conspire in, or condone, a Zulu or Swazi attack. It was Z.A.R. influence with these two polities which the Pedi rulers both feared and courted, and while the threat of a Zulu attack had diminished in the early 1860s, the danger of an attack by the Swazi, the principal prop to Z.A.R. authority in the eastern Transvaal, loomed large in the minds of Sekhukhune and his advisers.

During the reign of Mswati (1838-1865) the Swazi kingdom underwent a rationalization of internal relationships of economic and political control and consolidated its position as the dominant focus of power impinging on the north-eastern Transvaal. Swazi regiments regularly raided in pursuit of ivory, cattle and captives deep into the lowveld and bushveld. In 1862, Mswati intervened in the Shangane war of succession which devastated southern Mozambique and which led to the capital and core of the Gaza kingdom shifting to the north.[2] By the 1860s, one of the few remaining obstacles to Swazi control in the

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 9.10.1861.

[2] Bonner, 'The Swazi', pp. 155-80.

eastern Transvaal was the Pedi polity, which not only offered succour to failed contenders for high office within the Swazi kingdom and to victims of Swazi raids, but had also mounted effective resistance to Swazi armies and posed a potential threat to the free movement of Swazi warriors through the lowveld. Indeed, the growth of the Pedi polity was a testament to the extent of resistance to Swazi attack and exaction. The fact that Sekwati had survived Swazi raids did not, however, diminish the anxiety of the populace and their rulers at the devastation of life and possessions which would probably be the consequence of renewed attacks. The missionary record in the early 1860s abounds with accounts of scares created by the rumour of Swazi invasion or the report of the movement of Swazi warriors.[1]

After his accession, Sekhukhune's immediate concern in relation to the Lydenburg authorities was to ensure that they recognized him as the legitimate successor to Sekwati and that peaceful relations were maintained while he was occupied with imposing his authority on his rivals and subordinates. Faced with pressing problems within their own domain, the Lydenburg Krygsraad were quick to reply to Sekhukhune's initial letter with assurances of their recognition and their desire for 'peace and friendship'. However, they made a number of stipulations. Inboekselings should be denied refuge within the Pedi domain. Stolen cattle should be returned. Sekhukhune should ensure that his subjects who took employment on Boer farms did not desert, and should put an end to the raids launched by Msuthfo. Sekhukhune, in a letter dictated to Merensky and Nachtigal in late October, agreed to these conditions which were in substance a reiteration of the 1857 agreement between the Lydenburg Republic and Sekwati. The exception was that no mention was

---

[1] See, for example, B.M.B., 1862, p. 93; B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 20.4.1864.

made of the land and boundary questions. Sekhukhune partially observed these terms and sent gifts in order to display his desire to maintain friendly relations. It is clear, however, that the exchanges of gifts, letters and messages in the early years of Sekhukhune's reign no more constituted a recognition of subjection to Boer authority than had the 1857 agreement, but similarly, was an attempt by both parties concerned with internal conflicts and external threats to establish a framework for co-existence. Sekhukhune's dominant concern emerges clearly in the last paragraph of the second letter:

> With regard to the promise made by the Krijgsraad to keep the Zulahs and Amaswazies away from his land, Sekukuni answers as follows. He anticipates that the government will not send the Amaswazi or Zulahs to fight with him. And if one of these tribes attempts to pass through the lands inhabited by the Africaanen to attack his land then if the Africaanen request it he will send his regiments to fight with the Africaanen against them.[1]

The extent to which co-existence shaded into co-operation in the relationship between the Lydenburg authorities and the paramountcy (and which had been enlarged by the 1857 treaty and consolidated on the succession of Sekhukhune) was increased by two crucial developments. One was the mounting conflict between the Z.A.R. and the Kopa and Ndebele. While the Lydenburg Krygsraad made tentative suggestions that Sekhukhune might provide them with some military assistance - initially, at least - their hopes were pinned on other forms of aid. In November of 1861, Sekhukhune was requested not to harbour Mabhogo's subjects or cattle in the aftermath of a proposed Boer attack, and to provide the commando with sorghum and maize to sustain it in the field and labour to take care of the mobilized farmers' stock. These requests also reveal that Boer

---

[1] T.A., LL 1, Merensky to Landdros, 21.10.1861; see also, Merensky to Landdros, 25.9.1861.

dependence on African societies' assistance in mounting attacks went well beyond the supply of auxiliaries.[1] In 1861 and 1862, however, the Swazi regiments - upon which the Lydenburgers hopes for military assistance were pinned - failed to arrive.

The fact that over the same period the rift between the Maroteng and their erstwhile Kopa and Ndebele subjects widened, encouraged the Krygsraad to propose military collaboration to the paramount. A series of raids and counter-raids took place in 1861 and 1862 involving groups settled to the west of the Leolu and Ndzundza. It also appears that Mojalodi was a key figure in these attacks. The conflict was further fuelled by attacks on parties of returning Pedi migrants in which Mojalodi also participated. By mid-1862, the Maroteng were sufficiently exasperated by these attacks to inform the Landdros of Lydenburg of their desire to launch a full-scale attack against the Kopa and Ndzundza, and in mid-1863, Sekhukhune intimated that such an attack would be mounted in the following month. But although Sekhukhune's attitude became increasingly militant, up to this point he showed no desire to act either in direct combination or in concert with Boer forces.[2]

In September, 1863, however, Sekhukhune shifted his position and opened the way to direct military co-operation between the Boers and the Pedi. The most likely cause of this changed attitude was a major Swazi raid into the lowveld in late August, during which five chiefdoms were attacked. The spectre of the Swazi army prompted Sekhukhune to improve his relationship with Lydenburg officials. Early in September a gift of ivory was despatched to the Landdros with letters and messengers. These also reflected the paramount's unease at possible Boer complicity

---

1 T.A. S.S. 40, Suppl. Stukke, 40/61, Krijsraad Vergardering, Art. 4, 5.11.1861.

2 T.A. LL 1, Merensky to Landdros, 20.1.1862; S.S. 45, Suppl. Stukke, 61/62, Krijsraad Vergadering, 22.1.1861; LL 177, Nachtigal to Landdros, 3.3.1862; LL 1, Merensky to Landdros, 5.4.1863.

in the recent Swazi raids and in future raids. These Pedi initiatives encouraged the Lydenburg Krygsraad to renew their requests for military assistance against Mabhogo, particularly as Mswati still showed no sign of sending his regiments. In October, after having received a number of assurances, including a promised supply of ammunition and the return of cattle raided by the Ndebele, the paramount agreed to mobilize the Pedi army. Probably an increasingly pressing incentive to Pedi participation was the fear that the alternative - a Swazi army in the area at the behest of the Z.A.R. - might seriously threaten the Pedi heartland.[1]

On 24 October 1863, the Pedi army set out under the leadership of Sekhukhune's brother, Kgologoe, and accompanied by three representatives of the Z.A.R. On 29 October it reached the Boer commando which was encamped close to the besieged Ndzundza stronghold. On 3 November, the combined attack on the fortified hill was launched and rapidly adopted a familiar pattern. While the Pedi regiments attempted to storm the hill, the majority of the Boers were content to do little more than supply covering fire and to trust to the effectiveness of their mercenary cannoneers. Even this assistance was of little value once the Pedi warriors had reached the first line of fortifications; indeed, it could be positively dangerous to the attackers. The Pedi army was repulsed in some confusion and they and the Boers forced temporarily on to the defensive. The day's experience and, no doubt, the revived memories of the tendency of Boer commandos to entrust the bulk of the fighting and the cost in casualties to their African allies and auxiliaries, appears to have persuaded the Pedi army and its leaders to pursue the matter

---

1 T.A., LL 17, Messengers from Sekhukhune, 10.9.1863 and message from Landdros to Sekhukhune, 12.9.1863; LL 1, Nachtigal to Landdros, 10.9.1863; LL 17, Landdros to van Dijk and Nel, 5.10.1863, Landdros to Nachtigal, 29.10.1863 and 17.11.1863; LL 1, Merensky to Landdros 31.12.1863; LL 17, Landdros to Sekhukhune, 6.1.1864.

no further. The following day, without warning or consulting their erstwhile allies, the Pedi army broke camp and returned home, leaving the Boers once again facing the Ndzundza Ndebele alone.[1]

While the joint attack represented a high point in co-operation between the paramountcy and the Z.A.R. its consequence was to persuade Sekhukhune of the disadvantages of further direct military collaboration. Although Sekhukhune did not abandon plans to subdue the Ndebele by military means he does not appear to have again entertained the notion of operating in conjunction with Z.A.R. forces. Pedi resentment at the military failure of the Boers was exacerbated by the fact that the Lydenburg authorities failed to honour their pledge to return to the Pedi a portion of the stock raided or initially to supply Sekhukhune with ammunition. Equally, the threat of an alliance between the Boers and the Swazi - hostile to the Pedi - was revived by the Swazi attack on the Kopa on 10 May 1864, which decimated that chiefdom although the Swazi baulked at an attack on the Ndebele stronghold. This threat of potential collaboration between the Swazi and the Z.A.R. ensured that Sekhukhune, despite his disillusionment, continued to avoid open rupture or conflict.[2]

Sekhukhune's unease at the nature of the relationship between the Z.A.R. and the Swazi emerged clearly in 1864 in his response to the appointment of J.M. de Beer as Diplomatic Agent for the eastern Transvaal. The creation of this office was the product of the need, so clearly demonstrated in the early 1860s, for the Z.A.R. to establish effective channels of communication and to regularize its relationship with the

---

1 Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 220-22; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p.174.

2 T.A., S.S. 56, R374/64, Merensky to Landdros of Lydenburg, 28.7.1864; LL 17, Landdros to Sekhukhune, 6.1.1864; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, pp. 65-70.

more powerful African polities in the area.[1] In the instructions to the Agent issued in June of 1864, his sphere of authority was laid down as excluding 'external' as opposed to 'internal' African societies. His duties included maintaining good relations, monitoring trade - particularly that in arms and children - and investigating the perennial complaints over stock theft. The Swazi, Pedi and NdzundzaNdebele were to be his primary concern, but some Tsonga chiefdoms also fell within his purview.[2]

Sekhukhune, however, refused to deal with the Diplomatic Agent. The appointment took place at a time when the essential support to Boer authority provided by Swazi military strength had been recently and graphically demonstrated. J.M. de Beer was thus appointed in large part because of his likely expertise in handling relations with Mswati's kingdom. Sekhukhune already no doubt aware of the basis of the appointment was given further cause for concern by the fact that virtually the first official act of de Beer was to attempt to prevent a group fleeing Swaziland for the Pedi domain, and he even appears to have warned Sekhukhune against receiving them.[3] In August of 1864 in a letter sent to the Landdros of Lydenburg, the paramount rejected any possibility of dealing through the Diplomatic Agent and stated his preference for continuing to communicate through the Landdros. In conclusion to the letter he stated, in what appears to be a reference to de Beer, that he was fully aware that there were those amongst the Boers who wished to see Pedi power destroyed by the Swazi. Sekhukhune was sufficiently virulent in his rejection of the Agent, and the

---

1 T.A., S.S. 56, R300/64, Petition signed by van Niekerk and 31 others, 31.5.1864.

2 T.A., LL 179, Diary of Landdros of Lydenburg, 20.6.1864.

3 T.A., S.S. 51, R503A/64, Report of Coetser to Kruger, 17.8.1865.

missionaries sufficiently concerned at the consequences of continued intervention by that official that the paramount was spared any further dealings with de Beer.[1]

While the external relations of the Pedi paramountcy in this period were thus in part dictated by the danger of a Swazi attack and the possibility of a hostile alliance between that kingdom and the Z.A.R., this triangular relationship in turn needs to be placed in the context of a wider set of relationships of alliance, conflict and power in which the Zulu kingdom played a crucial part. The possibility of Zulu intervention played a clearly central role in shaping Swazi initiatives and, in particular, sustained the alliance between the Swazi and the Z.A.R.[2] Although in the early years of the 1860s Zulu armies remained relatively inactive, the possibility of their appearance alarmed the Pedi very nearly as much as it alarmed the Swazi, and the rulers of the various polities in the eastern Transvaal nervously monitored the relations of their neighbours and rivals with the Zulu in case an effective alliance should be formed.

Although the reports in the 1860s and early 1870s of contact between Zulu emissaries and the Ndzundza Ndebele and Pedi are sufficiently numerous and creditable to demand some belief, and there is evidence that the Pedi paramountcy sent tribute to the Zulu king, there is no evidence that they either tailored their own local actions to suit Zulu requirements or secured a promise of Zulu support. The oft-repeated allegation that such an alliance had been formed seems to have reflected competing fears rather than the reality of the bonds forged. This is, of course, not to deny that both the Pedi and the Zulu rulers were aware of the extent to which the existence and the strength of the

---

1 T.A., S.S. 51, R540/64, Merensky to Landdros of Lydenburg, 4.8.1864, and R565/64, Endemann to Landdros of Lydenburg, 7.9.1864.

2 Bonner, 'The Swazi', pp. 151, 184 and 207.

other enhanced their own position in relation to both the Swazi and the Z.A.R., and that particularly in the 1870s, their actions may have been to some extent suited to that awareness. The evidence for the 1860s is, however, that the Pedi lived, not in confidence derived from an alliance with Zulu power, but in some trepidation at the possibility that the Zulu army might, once again, raid the Pedi heartland.[1]

In the late 1860s, the threat posed to the polity by the Swazi army and Mampuru's determination to displace Sekhukhune from office became increasingly interlinked. After 1868, from the security of the Ndzundza chiefdom, now ruled by Mabhogo's successor Nyabele, Mampuru continued his endeavours to enlarge his following within the Pedi domain, concentrating his attentions on those individuals in conflict with Sekhukhune and those chiefdoms disaffected with Maroteng rule. The missionary Nachtigal, who maintained contact with Mampuru and who remained sympathetic to his cause, made extravagant claims as to the extent of his success, but the evidence suggests that while Mampuru may have achieved some contingent support he was never able to develop a sufficiently large core of followers within the polity to provide the basis for an effective challenge to Sekhukhune's rule. By the late 1860s, Mampuru's future looked bleak. His political efforts had yielded little reward. He had exhausted his welcome within the Magakala chiefdom and amongst the converts at Botsabelo. His sanctuary among the Ndzundza was also under threat; Sekhukhune was prepared to deal with Mabhogo's successor and proffered a range of inducements, including cattle, in an attempt to persuade Nyabele of the advantages of denying further succour to his brother. Mampuru's response to these reverses was to

---

[1] T.A., LL 1, Merensky, 21.10.1861. For an extended discussion of these issues see M.A. Monteith, 'Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune, 1875-1879', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand (1978), and see also ch. 9, part 2, below.

attempt to ally his cause with that of the major regional rival to the Pedi polity and to pin his hopes on Swazi military intervention.[1] By early 1869, if not before, Sekhukhune was aware of his brother's links with the Swazi and made plain to Commandant P.J. Coetser his belief that a Swazi attack on the Pedi domain was imminent, and his view that the Lydenburg authorities would be guilty of complicity in the attack if they permitted Swazi regiments to pass through their territory.[2]

In September of 1869, the anticipated Swazi attack was launched. Despite the warnings of the Queen Mother, Thandile, the Hhohho section of the Swazi pressed ahead with plans for the raid, hoping to emulate triumphs achieved during Mswati's reign.[3] They were accompanied, and probably guided, by followers of Mampuru. The Swazi regiments attempted to surround and capture Thaba Mosego but found instead that they were trapped and exposed within Tsatse valley and the labyrinth formed by the Leolu mountains. The attackers were soon demoralized by Pedi ambushes and routed by counter-attacks. Nachtigal's diary provides an eloquent account of the way in which defeat turned to flight and flight to disaster.

> As the Basotho [Pedi] drove them [the Swazi] back with increasing force they sought refuge in flight. However they had been exhausted by the long march, weakened through hunger and demoralised by the failure of their attack. As a result the majority of them firstly threw away their white shields and subsequently the remainder of their battle gear. When this failed to assist them some attempted to hide from their pursuers. Others stopped and impaled themselves on their own weapons or shot themselves. Resistance was no longer contemplated and the Basotho called out to one another "these are not enemies but locusts! Kill the locusts."

---

[1] U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 129, 2.11.1863, p. 974, 26.3.1865 and p. 677, 12.6.1879; B.M.B., 1869, p. 325 and B.M.B., 1870, p. 366.

[2] B.M.B., 1869, p. 324; T.A., LL 180, Messengers from Sekhukhune, 25.2.1869 and reply of Coetser.

[3] Bonner, 'The Swazi', p. 241.

> Old and young could now kill without fear and on that day over 500 Swazi were killed before they reached the Steelpoort. Amongst the dead were many chiefs and also children of Umswazi [Mswati] for they were less accustomed to fatigue, hunger and hardship than many of their men. They scattered in wild flight and many of those who were not felled by weapons died from starvation. They had been forbidden to steal cattle or grain from the Boers on the pain of death ... The entire route along which they had come and now fled was strewn with corpses. Those who still had assegais exchanged them for a hand-full of maize which they devoured raw. Some who stooped to attempt to drink water were unable to rise and remained lying. In this way, and in a short space of time, the bravest of the brave were destroyed.[1]

While Nachtigal's description is clearly heavily influenced by the Pedi view of these events, Swazi traditions confirm that this campaign had disastrous consequences for the regiments involved.[2] Already reeling from this blow, the Swazi army was to suffer another decisive defeat later in the same year, when, while returning from a raid into the Zoutpansberg, it was attacked and once more routed by the Pedi army, this time in combination with the forces of a number of lowveld chiefdoms. By the end of 1869, therefore, the Swazi military threat while not entirely extinguished probably looked considerably less menacing from the vantage of Thaba Mosego. The Pedi army had demonstrated that by exploiting the advantages of fire-arms, fortifications and a rugged terrain, the Swazi army could be overwhelmed, and with that demonstration, the balance of power in the eastern Transvaal shifted decisively away from the Swazi, and thus also from the Z.A.R., whose authority in large part depended on the military power of the former.[3]

There were a number of other less dramatic military encounters between Swazi and Pedi in the course of the following year. The most significant of these was a raid launched from the Pedi domain by Msuthfo

---

1 U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 815-6.

2 Bonner, 'The Swazi', p. 241.

3 Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 310; N.J. Van Warmelo, The Ba Letswalo or Banarene (Pretoria, 1944), p. 8; Van Warmelo, Bakoni of Mametsa, p.44.

against an outlying Swazi village during which a large number of cattle and captives were seized. The importance of this attack lay partly in the fact that it represented a departure from the essentially defensive posture which Pedi rulers had previously adopted towards the Swazi kingdom. As significant, however, is the fact that there is clear evidence of the complicity of prominent members of the Lydenburg Boer community, most notably D.J.G. Coetzee and his client Tiane (also known as Baviaan) in both the inception and execution of the raid.[1]

While the focus of this chapter has mainly been on the formal relationship between the Pedi paramount and Lydenburg officials, this has largely been a consequence of the nature of the available documentation. Thus an essential aspect of the external relations of the Pedi polity, the network of relationships of exchange, clientage and alliance which linked Pedi rulers to a range of Boer notables, has been neglected. Although the nature of these relationships will be further explored in following chapters, they also played a vital role in shaping the pattern of events in the eastern Transvaal.[2] Nonetheless, this role remains difficult to document, partly because many of the transactions which sustained these networks were illicit. The 1870 raid provides a rare instance in which these informal relationships surface, tantalizingly, in the documentary record.

The Swazi spies who shadowed the raiders during their return journey observed both that Msuthfo was accompanied by Tiane and others in Coetzee's service, and that the entire band spent a night on Coetzee's

---

[1] The fullest account of this raid is in B.M.B., 1872, pp. 11-13; see also, T.A. LL 180, Statement of Coetzee, 1.4.1870; LL 4, 175/72, State Secretary to Jansen, 18.9.1872 & enclosures; LL 19, 132/70, Breytenbach and Joubert to Landdros, 15.8.1870.

[2] See ch. 6, part 1 and ch. 9, part 2.

farm. Tandile (the Swazi Queen Mother) was determined to punish participants in the attack, and her suspicions as to the extent of Boer complicity, led her to despatch an army to Lydenburg to demand the extradition of Tiane. Presumably Coetzee was not included in this demand because there was no evidence of his direct involvement in the raid and because Tandile wished to allow for the possibility of a continuing alliance between the Z.A.R. and the Swazi kingdom. The Landdros, while intent on denying any official sanction for the raid, was initially reluctant to hand over Tiane. Confronted by threats of Swazi retaliation, his resolve crumbled. Despite Coetzee's attempts to ransom his client for fourteen head of cattle and one horse, and Swazi assurance to the Lydenburg officials that he would be taken safely back to Swaziland, Tiane - along with another in Coetzee's employ - was executed by the Swazi warriors in sight of his master's farmhouse.[1]

The participation of Coetzee and Tiane in this attack is surprising in that both men had maintained close relations with Swazi rulers throughout the 1860s. Coetzee played a central role in the trade - particularly that in children - between the Swazi kingdom and the eastern Transvaal settlers. It is probable, however, that his support for Mbilini - a defeated contender for the throne - after Mswati's death in 1866, lost him his privileged trading position in the latter half of the 1860s, although he continued to maintain close relations with Swazi rulers. There was also a steady decline in the numbers of children traded from the Swazi kingdom in the late 1860s. Against this background, the suggestions of the Berlin missionaries that Coetzee had participated in the raid in order to gain a share of the booty seem plausible. The Swazi military reverses of the late 1860s reduced the likelihood of a resurgence in the supply of captives from that source, and the fact that

---

[1] B.M.B., 1872, pp. 11-13.

Msuthfo was the only chief subordinate to the Pedi paramountcy prepared to trade children, suggests one possible basis of the alliance between Msuthfo and Coetzee, and one which receives partial confirmation from the dedication which the raiders displayed to the taking of captives. While it seems likely that the women and children seized were mainly destined to swell the ranks of Msuthfo's followers, there is evidence that some found their way into Boer society as inboekselings through the agency of Coetzee.[1]

The extent of the paramountcy's involvement in the raid is also unclear. There are, however, a number of reasons for doubting that Sekhukhune played a central part in mounting the raid or, possibly, was even fully aware of his subordinate's intentions. Msuthfo, although initially bound by a relationship of close clientage to Sekhukhune, gained and retained considerable autonomy within the Pedi polity as a result of the value of his services to his patron. He exploited his freedom of action both to build up his own following and to make sporadic raids against his former subjects in the Lydenburg district, although Sekhukhune sought - with partial success - to restrain him from the latter activity. Further cause for doubting Maroteng complicity is given by the fact that Pedi participation in the raid appears to have been restricted to members of Msuthfo's chiefdom, and Sekhukhune had little reason to launch an attack which, while it invited Swazi retaliation, did nothing to further undermine that kingdom's military strength. The balance of power in the eastern Transvaal shifted during the course of 1869 but it seems unlikely that the Pedi rulers viewed the possibility

---

[1] T.A., LL 18 564/67, Landdros Coetzee, 2.5.1867; see also, ch. 6, part 2 below and Bonner, 'The Swazi', pp. 155-80; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 168, 29.7.1864; B.M.B., 1872, p. 12; T.A. LL 180, Statement, Fick, 21.6.1870.

of renewed Swazi attacks with equanimity. Finally, there is evidence that Msuthfo's relationship with Sekhukhune became increasingly strained in the early 1870's and that the former was intent on carving out an independent political niche in the eastern Transvaal. Thus the most convincing provisional explanation of the 1870 raid against the Swazi is that it represented Msuthfo's ambitions and Coetzee's interests rather more closely than the paramountcy's policies.[1]

This incident also reveals the extent to which the changed balance of power in the eastern Transvaal had divergent consequences for the Pedi polity. In the early 1870s, the extent to which it served as an alternative source of authority and legitimacy to the Swazi kingdom and the Z.A.R. was enhanced. Groups on the periphery of the Pedi domain which had previously lived under a dual or triple hegemony could, and did, opt for exclusive allegiance to the Maroteng paramountcy. The Maroteng, in turn, were better placed to demand recognition of their authority. However, while the area under Maroteng hegemony expanded, there were processes at work within the enlarged domain which reduced the power that the paramountcy was able to exercise over groups which recognized its authority. During the reign of Sekwati and the early period of that of Sekhukhune, the existence of the Swazi military threat was one important centripetal force which shaped the relationship between the paramountcy and the subordinate chiefdoms. To move out of the Pedi heartland - the area between the Olifants and Steelpoort Rivers - was to run the danger of falling prey to Swazi attack or Boer exactions. The partial removal of the Swazi military threat and the mounting pressure on resources, however, encouraged centrifugal tendencies within the polity. Some groups abandoned the harsh but defensible heartland for the more fertile, but exposed, periphery. Equally, not all refugee groups

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 96; B.M.B., 1872, p. 11; Bonner, 'The Swazi', p. 151; T.A., LL 179, de Villiers to Landdros, 20.5.1867; S.S. R570/67, Potgieter to Uitvoerende Raad, 27.5. 1867; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 99 , 27.3.1872.

sought the security of living within the core of the Pedi domain: some now opted for settlement on the periphery, thus combining the protection afforded by the enhanced authority of the Pedi polity with greater freedom from direct control than would have been possible in the old heartland. The changed balance of power in the region and the dispersing of settlement also gave increased scope to subordinate rulers to build up their followings on the periphery of the Pedi domain while retaining considerable independence of the paramountcy.

The undermining of the power of the Swazi kingdom and consequently the authority of the Z.A.R. came at a time when the Boer Republic's control over much of the northern Transvaal had been effectively challenged. In 1867, in the face of growing resistance by the Venda and other groups, Commandant-General Paul Kruger withdrew his forces from Schoemansdal which was subsequently abandoned by its inhabitants. The collapse of Z.A.R. authority spread south to the Nyl River and by the late 1860s much of the area between the Olifhants and the Limpopo Rivers had been abandoned by whites, and those who remained did so partly on the sufferance of, and by paying tribute to, neighbouring African rulers. The Z.A.R. had pinned its hopes on the Swazi regiments crushing the resistance in the north but the events of 1869 rudely shattered these expectations. The early 1870s were to witness further erosions of the state's authority. The Swazi, while subdued, were not defeated and awaited an opportunity to revenge the reverses of 1869 and 1870. In 1871, Mampuru, at the behest of Tandile, the Queen Mother, finally quit the Ndzundza Ndebele and settled in the heartland of the Swazi Kingdom.[1]

---

[1] B.M.B., 1872, pp. 17, 79-80.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONVERTS AND MISSIONARIES IN THE PEDI DOMAIN

The processes of change and conflict at work within the Pedi polity also influenced and interacted with the growth of Christian belief within the society and the impact of missionary endeavour on it. The first missionaries to settle within the Pedi domain were Alexander Merensky and Albert Nachtigal of the Berlin Missionary Society. In 1861 they established a station, Khalatlolu (the place of the elephant) west of the Leolu mountains. In 1863 and 1864, two further stations were started: Phatametsane under the direction of C. Endemann, and Ga Ratau under Merensky. Mounting popular and chiefly hostility to the converts and missionaries, however, resulted in all three mission stations being abandoned by early 1866.

The period of missionary activity is one of the most fully documented and described episodes in nineteenth century Pedi history, but remains one of the less well understood. The events of these years came to form an essential part in the mythology of the Lutheran Church in the Transvaal and that of the Berlin Missionary Society. They were (and are) used to highlight 'the steadfastness of the first aboriginal converts to Christianity', to show ' how great the privations and dangers were that the missionaries had to endure' and to reveal 'how profoundly ... [the missionaries'] religion governed their conduct'.[1] Relatively recent commentaries on the missionary record go as far as asserting that their experiences in the Pedi domain reveal 'the terrible state of insecurity and oppression to which the natives were subject while they were under the rule of bloodthirsty and despotic chiefs'.[2] No serious attempt has hitherto been made to probe behind the missionary account and interpretation of their expulsion.

---

1 G.P.J. Trümpelmann, 'Introduction' to Wangemann, Maleo en Sekokoeni, pp. xix-xx.

2 Ibid.

Those explanations that have been advanced have been shaped, in the main, by a crude cultural determinism. The dominant missionary view was that the conflicts were an inevitable consequence of the fact that the essential basis of chiefly power was religious. This view of chiefship also facilitated the conclusion which became increasingly prevalent among the Berlin missionaries that Christian advance depended on the destruction of chiefly power. This interpretation has had a profound influence on historical accounts. Van Rooyen, for example, adopts his central argument directly from Merensky and asserts that as the basis of Sekhukhune's power was 'sociaal-religieus' (social religious), the expulsion of the missionaries was inevitable. There are even strong echoes of this approach in the modern anthropological literature. H.O. Mönnig asserts that 'Pedi culture is focused completely on its religion - more so, I believe, than that of any other South African Bantu'. This culturally determinist approach, aside from missing the obvious point that conflict was as much the result of a culture-bound missionary Christianity as it was the consequence of the extent to which chiefly power was based on ritual authority, prevents a full understanding of the way in which Christianity and Christians were caught up in the cross-currents of political conflict and economic change within the society. It also fails to draw on the literature on comparable societies which suggests that, while some conflicts were probably inevitable, there is no structural necessity for a paramount to be in the forefront of resistance to Christianity.[1] In short, much remains to be explained.

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 166-7; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 155-6; Mönnig, The Pedi, vii; L. Thompson, Survival in Two Worlds, Moshoeshoe of Lesotho, 1786-1870 (Oxford, 1975), pp. 70-104; G.N. Parsons, 'Khama III, the Bamangwato, and the British, with special reference to 1895-1923', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh (1973), pp. 194-229.

While Merensky and Nachtigal were the first missionaries to settle in the heartland of the Pedi polity, they were far from primarily or solely responsible for the growing awareness of Christianity within the society. Considerable numbers of Pedi had had experience of some of the variants of Christian ideology prior to the arrival of the missionaries. For some, the encounter with Christianity had been the consequence of inboekseling status within Boer society, residence on land settled by Boers, the sale of their labour to eastern Transvaal farmers, or participation in hunting parties. In fact, some of the earliest individuals converted by the missionaries were those whom they described as 'polished natives' - those who had spent long periods of time in direct contact with Boer society.[1] As, and possible more, important was the exposure to missionary Christianity of travellers to the Cape and Natal. Probably the first missionaries encountered by Pedi were those from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society who settled within Mshweshwe's domain. The party of 'Baperi' met by Arbousset at Morija in 1836 regularly attended services, and

> when they returned to their country took with them sesuto alphabets of which they had learned some words. They knew in general the fundamental doctrines of the Bible and one of them could repeat correctly the Lord's Prayer.[2]

The importance of missionaries and mission stations to Pedi migrants in this period did not, of course, automatically lead to their conversion. But it did ensure that these men were exposed to Christianity at the same time as they were having to grapple with survival within colonial society. The harsh realities of labouring within a colonial town, and their encounter with colonial ideology and power posed problems of explanation for migrants which were not easily resolved within their existing world

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 39-40; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 116.

[2] Arbousset, Narrative, p. 188.

view. This conceptual confrontation led, in part, to an elaboration of the ideologies which were dominant within Pedi society, but it also led to the incorporation of aspects of Christian thought and practice. Even those individuals who returned from spells of migrancy unpersuaded by the Christian message were, nonetheless, acquainted with some of the rudiments of Christian theology and ritual. A small minority became convinced Christians and some were formally converted and baptized. A number of this group openly professed their faith on their return to the Pedi domain where some of them even took it upon themselves to evangelize their fellows. It was the existence and activity of these individuals which laid the basis for the development of Christianity in the heartland of the Pedi polity.

The developing importance of migrant labour to the Cape and Natal in the 1850s and 1860s ensured that increasing numbers of men were exposed to Christianity. Mission stations provided islands of at least potential hospitality during the journey south, and the French missionaries among the southern Sotho were one source of passes for entering the Cape Colony. It was not only en route that missionaries and mission stations played an important part in the system of migrancy. By the late 1850s, both Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage contained significant numbers of Pedi migrants, and it seems that in both towns mission stations provided a focus for the migrant community. Nachtigal, while visiting Port Elizabeth in 1865, encountered a group of Pedi living on the L.M.S. mission hospital on Hospital Hill.

> Kaffers, Fingu, Basotho [Pedi] and some Hottentots lived there, some of these lived in kaffir huts and others in small houses. The houses were small with one or two rooms with one window. The Sotho did not seek bigger or better as in the main they would only stay a few years until they had earned sufficient cash and a gun and then would return home.[1]

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 278, 14.8.1865.

While no direct evidence has come to hand of the living arrangements of Pedi migrants in Natal, Etherington suggests that a similar pattern existed. He shows that Natal stations also provided temporary homes for migrant workers whose homes lay beyond the borders of the colony. Further, African men working in the towns of Natal frequently sought the help of missionaries in sending wages or messages to their families in other parts of Southern Africa and in this way, they were introduced to Christian chapels and schools. An additional incentive to migrants to Natal to ally themselves with Christianity was that by so doing they could in some cases win exemption from the colonial edict requiring all black immigrants to serve three years in the service of white employers.[1]

Two men, Jan Masadi and Jacob Mantladi, illustrate this point particularly effectively. Jan Masadi travelled to Port Elizabeth in 1857 and during his sojourn there was told by fellow migrants of a Methodist missionary who

> ... while other whites said that the black man was only suited to slave labour, ... taught that before God the black man was worth as much as the white, and that there was also a life after death for the black man and a land of joy and splendour.[2]

Masadi regularly attended the Methodist chapel and was eventually baptized. He returned home with the five books of Moses in Nguni which he could read fairly fluently. Jacob Mantladi worked first in Uitenhage and then in Port Elizabeth, and although not baptized was profoundly influenced by missionary teaching. Both men, on their return to the Transvaal, continued with Christian observances. They set aside Sundays for prayer and religious discussion, and Mantladi, with some success, set out to

---

[1] N. Etherington, Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880, (London, 1978), pp. 92-3.

[2] Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 15.

persuade others of the virtue of his faith. Unfortunately, there exists no record of the version of Christianity that Mantladi expounded, but he was able to win a number of converts. One of the most important of these, and one who remained in the vanguard of the development of a Christian community, was Martinus Sewushane.[1]

The existence of this group not only provided a number of ready adherents for the missionaries when they arrived, but its members continued to play an active role in the spread of Christianity within Pedi society. In the early years, the missionaries - lacking linguistic, political and social skills - were heavily dependent on their assistance. The evidence makes it clear that most of those won over to the cause of the missionaries were won through their efforts, and in particular those of Mantladi and Sewushane. The impression that emerges from a close reading of the missionary reports is that initially the missionaries were constantly attempting to keep pace with their followers.[2] It is, of course, impossible to draw an absolute distinction between the impact of the missionaries and that of the members of this group. Quite clearly, while the missionaries enjoyed a good relationship with Sekwati and then Sekhukhune, the good standing of their patrons facilitated their own efforts. There also seems to be little doubt that the group accepted the ultimate doctrinal and moral authority of the missionaries. The point is that they constituted the cutting edge of Christianity within the society, and that the successes the missionaries enjoyed in the early years were in good part due to their efforts. An indication of the

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 7-25, 26-45, 47-64; Sewushane was later to become Chief Pastor of the Lutheran Bapedi Church which separated from the B.M.S. in 1889.

[2] Ibid., see in particular, pp. 33-6, 51-60; B.M.S., 1862, pp. 89-90.

course of development of Christian groups of this kind in the absence of local missionaries is provided by Albert Nachtigal's report in 1870 that two men had come to him from the Mphaphlele chiefdom to ask for books to assist them with teaching and improving their reading and writing. They told him that

> ... they and others from their chiefdom had earlier worked in the English colonies. One had been in British Kafferland and the other in Maritzburg in Natal. There they had learned to know and love God's word and had also learned to read. One had been baptized in Maritzburg by Missionary Allison but the other had not been baptized. They had returned to their homeland and had told their countrymen the things they had heard and some of these had come to share their faith. Each Sunday they preached in a small church which they had built and many came to listen.[1]

The fact of Pedi participation in migrant labour while important in accounting for the development of Christianity within the Pedi domain was, of course, far from the sole element in conversion. Indeed, some of the factors which prompted the establishment and maintenance of a system of migrant labour form an essential backdrop to understanding the incidence of conversion. These include the economic and political disruption and destruction consequent on the difaqane and the arrival of the Trekkers, the continued movement of refugees into the area of Pedi hegemony and the patterns of stratification and dependence within the society. Missionaries provided potential succour and support for those who were or became in some way marginal in the society, and Christianity may also have held some appeal for those individuals who wished to escape from the constraints of a redistributional ideology.[2]

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 27.9.1870.

[2] The life histories of converts collected by missionaries are suggestive in all these respects. See Wangemann, Lebensbilder; B.M.B., 1868, pp. 235-55; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 590-900, in particular pp. 594-5, 645-700, 842-4, 891 and 894. The material is not adequate, and this context is not appropriate, however, to demonstrate these points conclusively.

The re-ordering of relationships of power within and between societies, and the enlargement of scale which the nineteenth century brought, also demanded new ways of conceptualising and comprehending the spiritual as well as the temporal world.[1] However, on the basis of the existing evidence, and in the context of this chapter, it is difficult to advance an integrated, holistic account of conversion within the society. One thing is nevertheless plain: the incidence of conversion was most pronounced at the capital Thaba Mosego, despite the fact that the main mission stations were founded at some distance from it.[2] The reason for this pattern of conversion and its consequences are vital to any explanation of the conflicts which developed out of the growth of the Christian community within the Pedi domain.

The question of why the paramountcy provided the bulk of the early converts cannot be conclusively answered on the basis of the available evidence. But some tentative explanations can be advanced which draw on a specific interaction of structural and contingent factors. Amongst those most prone to conversion were members of two broad categories: clients of the paramount and royal wives. The institution of clientage had played an important part in the growth of the Maroteng chiefdom. Clients, in the main, consisted of refugees, and other poor and kinless individuals dependent on the paramount initially for protection and subsequently for access to the means of production and reproduction. There were, however, a number of routes into clientage, and a number of forms. This diversity is reflected in the histories of individuals who became prominent Christians. Martinus Sewushane, after the death of

---

1 The intellectualist approach to conversion elaborated by J. Peel and R. Horton, for example, R. Horton, 'African Conversion', Africa, XLI, 2 (1971), pp. 86-108, is particularly suggestive in this respect and also in relation to the experiences of Pedi migrants in the Cape Colony and elsewhere, but research and documentation of a different order to that undertaken and available would be required to fully apply these insights to the Pedi case. See also, T.O. Ranger, 'Introduction', in T.O. Ranger and J. Weller (eds.) Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), pp. 6-12.

2 B.M.B., 1862, p. 175.

his father and the execution of his guardian and uncle for practicing witchcraft, fled to Sekwati who permitted him to settle near him and who had him trained in the maintenance and repair of fire-arms in order that he could become the paramount's personal gunsmith. Andreas Noane Mofzia fled inboekseling status within Boer society and sought refuge within the Pedi domain. Sekhukhune set him to work on his mother's lands and Mofzia and other inboekselings at the capital were increasingly drawn into the group of Christians who lived in the environs of Thaba Mosago.[1]

The second category which emerges from the missionary account is that of the wives of the paramount. This category included both women for whom the paramount had paid bridewealth, and those demanded by, or offered as tribute to, him. There were considerable distinctions of rank and status within this category and the importance of affinal relations in the political structure of the Pedi polity meant that conflicts between the paramount and subordinate chieftaincies could have dire consequences for certain of his spouses. It was, however, wives of Sekwati who had devolved upon Sekhukhune at his father's death who appear to have been most responsive to Sewushane's arguments. The most celebrated of these was Tlakale (later to marry Sewushane) who had been presented to Sekwati by a subordinate chief attempting to secure the paramount's support in a conflict with a neighbour. Sekwati had, in turn, allowed her to consort with Mampuru, but Sekhukhune was determined to enforce his control over the royal wives. While Tlakale was the most celebrated of the wives who converted, she was of lower rank than either Modikischeng or Mankone - other wives of Sekwati who were won over by circumstances and/or persuasion to Christianity.[2]

---

[1] Ch. 1, part 2, and ch. 2; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 49-54; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 842-4.

[2] Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 164-73; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 125-8.

The fact that the royal wives who converted were Sekwati's, points to probably the most important reason for the relatively rapid growth of Christianity at the capital: shortly after the missionaries had settled at Khalatlolu, Sekwati died. The consequence of the death and succession at the capital was the re-ordering of some relationships of power, rank and authority. It threatened those whose positions had been directly dependent on their relationship to Sekwati with the possibility of a dramatic reduction in their status. The ordering of succession added to the tensions between royal agnates. It also affected the fortunes of those who had followed the lead of Sekwati in supporting Mampuru's claims to the paramountcy, only to see Sekhukhune succeed in enforcing his claim on the death of his father. It was in this atmosphere of change, and latent and manifest strife at the capital that the Christian group grew, and this probably contributed to its initial successes and its ultimate failure.[1]

While Sekhukhune had lived away from the capital and had secured a broad basis of support, Mampuru who stayed close to his father's side found the majority of his support was concentrated in the environs of Thaba Mosego. It seems that in the period immediately after the succession of Sekhukhune, the Christian movement became intertwined with, if not synonymous with, the supporters of Mampuru. As tensions between Mampuru and his elder brother grew, the former made a point of cultivating the friendship of the missionaries. A number of converts in this period participated in Mampuru's defiance of his brother, and the most prominent and active of the Christians living at Thaba Mosego - Sewushane - was

---

[1] Ch. 3, part 1; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 176-7; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 53-4.

also one of Mampuru's supporters. Sekhukhune's decision in March of 1862 to bar Sewushane from preaching at the capital was probably more the consequence of his growing unease about his brother and the political complexion of the missionaries' adherents, than a desire to attack Christianity. When his relationship with Mampuru deteriorated into open conflict later that year, his fears about the political complexion of the Christians cannot have been eased by the prominence of converts among Mampuru's supporters, the appeals made by the missionaries on Mampuru's behalf, and the fact that Mampuru initially took shelter in the neighbourhood of Khalatlolu. Although the extent to which the converts acted as a political group at this point is unclear, the activities of some of the converts provided ample basis for unease on the part of the paramount. Sekhukhune remained particularly suspicious of Sewushane and, if the missionaries are to be believed, toyed more than once with the idea of executing him.[1]

In 1863, Sekhukhune, having weathered the initial conflicts after his accession, moderated his attitude to the Christians and even allowed the missionaries to establish a second station. Phatemetsane was, however, even further removed from Thaba Mosego than was Khalatlolu. Nonetheless, while the paramount's hostility towards the converts mellowed, there was a wider hostility to the Christians which was by no means dependent on Sekhukhune's lead. Merensky's account of the posture of the paramount in relation to the missionaries and the converts published in 1863 does not reconcile easily with his later writings or with his explanation of the conflicts.

> It cannot be ignored that such an eduring movement as the Christian movement in the midst of the society calls forth and feeds an ever increasing hostility on the part of witchdoctors, the higher classes and the masses. After the protection of God, it has been the arm of King Sekukuni which has shielded the Christians from the greatest harm.[2]

---

[1] Ibid.; B.M.B., 1862, pp. 265, 364-7; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 57.

[2] B.M.B., 1863, p. 404; see also, B.M.B., 1863, pp. 366-75.

One element in the hostility towards the Christians was a reaction against the cavalier fashion in which converts treated conventional ritual forms and observances. There were, for example, complaints that converts did not perform the appropriate rituals on the death of relatives, and so endangered the land and its inhabitants. As galling to their fellows was the failure of Christians to participate in rituals designed to safeguard the society in the event of attack by the Swazi or other enemies. These breaches, in a community in which chance was not considered sufficient explanation for the incidence of drought and disease, were long remembered. An example of this is provided by the case of Andries Moloi, who early in 1862 in an excess of religious zeal and in order to demonstrate his freedom from superstition, shot an ibis, despite taboos against harming the bird. When the rains failed to arrive later in that year, Moloi's act of bravado was recalled with some foreboding, and Legolane, whose village lay close to Khalatlolu, sent to Sekhukhune to discover the appropriate steps to take to expiate the breach of ritual prohibition. In June of 1864 with outbreaks of fever at the capital, and in an atmosphere of sharpening animosity towards the converts, Sekhukhune pointed out to Sewushane,

> Do you not see, son of Moganedi, how the people here are dying (from fever)? All the people say that the believers have bewitched them. And divination also points to you.[1]

However, the hostility to the converts also reflected the still more profound threat to the fabric of the society and to the basis of power and authority represented by the Christians' rejection of polygyny and bridewealth. Sewushane made himself particularly unpopular at the capital by focusing his attentions on the wives of prominent men, and

---

[1] Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 111; B.M.B., 1863, p. 392; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 76; 5.11.1862; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 154.

Sekhukhune found himself plagued by vigorous complaints from the 'elders' that Sewushane was intent on undermining their control over their women.[1] Thus, while Sekhukhune continued to shield the converts from their more zealous opponents to the very end, the cost to him of allowing them unrestricted freedom grew progressively more irksome.

Sekhukhune's reserves of good-will towards the converts were further depleted by the responsiveness of some of his wives and brothers to Christianity. Christianity began to intrude on two areas which were fundamental to the paramount's power and to the form and incidence of conflict within the society: the control over his wives and their progeny, and the tensions which existed between royal agnates. The case of Tlakale is the most fully documented of the royal wives. Her relatively low rank and origins have been noted above, but her relationship with Mampuru ensured her prominence in the mind of the paramount. Aside from this, the female progeny of those who were formally wives of Sekwati (whatever their actual parentage) commanded particularly inflated bridewealth. The refusal of Tlakale to cohabit with a man of the paramount's choice because of her Christian faith, on top of her earlier association with Mampuru and her continuing relationship with Sewushane, tested Sekhukhune's tolerance to the limit. Her baptism in 1864 appears to have been one of the sparks which ignited the final round of conflicts between the paramount and the Christians.[2]

Even more disturbing for Sekhukhune was the growing involvement with the Christians of Kgalema (later Johannes) Dinkwanyane, his younger half-brother. According to the missionary account, Dinkwanyane, while in

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 125, 128; B.M.B., 1862, p. 266.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 125, 182-3, 190-92; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, p. 133.

contact with Sewushane remained uncertain of the extent of his interest in Christianity until he observed the carnage occasioned by the attack of the Maroteng and their allies on the Phaala chiefdom in 1862. The impression that this made upon him persuaded him to seek a greater understanding of Christianity, and his cousin (David) Mpyane introduced him to Mantladi. Mpyane was a grandson of Makgeru (a senior son of Thulare) and his father, Kgabe, had been one of the major obstacles to Sekwati's achieving dominance in the area on his return from the northern Transvaal. The involvement of his brother and the son of an old rival was a source of considerable concern to Sekhukhune. He believed that Mpyane's Christianity was a consequence of 'old matters. I have already fought with and killed your father'.[1] Sekhukhune employed a variety of means to persuade Dinkwanyane to abandon Christianity, and for some time in 1863 appeared to have been successful. By early 1864, however, Dinkwanyane had regained his faith and the Christians could count amongst their number a full royal. While it seems unlikely that Dinkwanyane would have been able to use this, or any other basis of support in the society, to mount an effective challenge to Sekhukhune, the latter ran a serious risk in allowing the Christian community, and thus potential support for his brother, to increase.

Sekwati's willingness to accept missionaries among his people, and his (and Sekhukhune's) expectation of their role within the society was probably strongly influenced by the position and activities of the French missionaries among the southern Sotho. While the relationship between the missionaries and Mshweshwe was not devoid of conflict, the missionaries on the whole remained unambivalent in their support of the king against

---

[1] Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 112; Wangemann, Lebensbilder, pp. 143-56; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 123-5.

internal rivals and external enemies. Mshweshwe was well entrenched in power on the arrival of the missionaries in 1832 and one of their major ambitions remained the conversion of the king. Thompson goes so far as to argue that

> The extension of the authority of their patron involved the extension of their own influence and ... provided the means were peaceful, they could co-operate with a clear conscience. So Moshoeshoe and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society became veritable partners in expansion.[1]

For Sekwati, ringed by enemies, this image of missionaries presumably held considerable attraction. Arbousset observed in 1841,

> ... a mission to the Baperis would be most important... This we know for certain that Sekuati ... [is] well disposed towards the reception of messengers of salvation, for [he has] earnestly entreated us for them.[2]

The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society did not have the resources to meet these entreaties and by 1858 Sekwati, having despaired of obtaining missionaries through any other channel, sought in vain the assistance of the Landdros of Lydenburg. In 1859 the German missionaries Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Grützner arrived in the Transvaal with the ambition of re-starting missionary work amongst the Swazi. Rapidly exhausting their welcome in that society, they turned their attentions to the Kopa, still under the control of the Lydenburg authorities. The Pedi polity was the obvious next step.

The Berlin Missionary Society (also known as The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Heathen) of which Merensky and Grützner were representatives, was founded in 1824 during the religious revival in Germany - particularly the north-eastern part of the country - which followed the Napoleonic wars.[3] The 'aristocratic young men' who

---

[1] Thompson, Survival, p. 84.

[2] Arbousset, Narrative, p. 188.

[3] D.E. Kratzenstein, Kurze Geschichte der Berliner Mission (Berlin, 1878) pp. 2-15; Trümpelmann, 'Introduction', xiv-xx.

formed the first committee of the B.M.S. were motivated by a combination of piety and patriotism and one of their ideals was that the Prussian state should also be represented in Christianising the world.[1] The theological position of the mission was initially a mild Lutheranism, but this orientation was strengthened by the appointment of J.C. Wallman, an orthodox Lutheran, as Mission Director in 1857. Under his guidance, the organization reached an apogee of Lutheranism and hierarchy and he had a seminal influence on many of the first missionaries despatched to the Transvaal. In 1865, Wallman was succeeded by T. Wangemann who took a particular interest in the development of the South African mission field and whose voluminous publications both testify to his zeal and remain an essential source for the history of the mission.

Seminarians were, in the main, youths with elementary and artisan education and, for many, a missionary career offered one of the few possibilities of escaping working class status. The career of Alexander Merensky, orphaned early in life, came in time to dramatize the heights to which an intensely ambitious, gifted but improverished youth could rise through a missionary career in South and East Africa and through involvement in the flowering of colonialism in Germany. Seminarians were articled, much as apprentices in the crafts, and during their five years in the seminary ascended a ladder of privilege and material dependence in an institution which stressed obedience and humility. The mood and relationship of the seminary in Berlin and in the field in South Africa reflected the hierarchical and authoritarian milieu of Prussia; and to a pietistic rigour which did not easily accommodate indigenous custom and which also implied a firm distinction between those who were saved and those who were not, the Berlin missionaries in the

---

[1] M. Wright, German Missions in Tanganyika, 1891-1941 (Oxford, 1971) p. 2-15, see in particular, p. 14.

nineteenth century added an extra cultural load of orderliness and industry as an index of Christianity.[1]

While on their arrival in the Transvaal the Berlin missionaries were by no means reconciled to all aspects of Boer society and rule, they had, nonetheless, the contrasting examples of the expulsion of the L.M.S. by the Z.A.R. in 1852, and the acceptance and even encouragement of the Hermannsburg Mission Society, to guide them.[2] Beyond this, they had their own experiences in the Cape and Natal which had led one commentator to reflect in the Missionsberichte in 1861 'It is certain that in a country where God's judgement has broken the people politically the seed of evangelism is most conveniently sowed; that is where the missionaries enjoy the legal protection of the colonial government'.[3] Merensky and Grützner were careful to observe the code of conduct laid down for missionaries by the Z.A.R. and sought to avoid presenting any open challenge to the claims to authority of the Boer State. While clearly dubious of the strength of the claims of the Lydenburgers to authority over the Pedi, they gave these claims formal and public credence, and they appear to have accepted that their ultimate allegiance and interest lay with the Z.A.R. Merensky wrote to the Landdros of Lydenburg in 1861, stressing that while he wished to remain nothing more than a missionary in the eyes of his congregation 'nonetheless I will always be willing to support my government in its attempts to maintain law and order'.[4] While this declaration probably reflected his estimate

---

1 Ibid.; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 2; T.S. Van Rooyen, 'Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky in die Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1859-1882', Archives Year Book, XVII, 2 (1954). The most comprehensive account of the history of the B.M.S. in the Transvaal is D.W. Van Der Merwe, 'Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in die Transvaal, 1860-1900', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, (1975).

2 Trümpelmann, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

3 B.M.B., 1861, p. 174.

4 T.A., LL 1, Merensky to Landdros, 1.9.1861.

of the susceptibilities of the Landdros as accurately as it mirrored his own sentiments, Merensky and his colleagues were never to display the same commitment to the cause of the Pedi paramount that the French missionaries mustered in their support of Mshweshwe.

Although Merensky and Nachtigal were 'Sekwati's missionaries' and looked suspiciously like sharing their deceased patron's choice of a successor, Sekhukhune initially welcomed their presence.[1] They provided him with political information and channels of written communication both to the Lydenburg authorities and other African polities, most importantly Mshweshwe's kingdom. They could also write passes for, and letters to and for, his subjects. In the initial stages of his relationship with the missionaries, Sekhukhune both expressed some personal interest in Christianity and by and large facilitated their endeavours while remaining cautious of the activities of Sewushane and the other converts. In his desire to impress his good faith upon the missionaries, the paramount went as far as declaring Sunday to be a day of rest, although the missionaries subsequently discovered to their chagrin that he had employed the magical properties of the number seven to explain this departure to his subjects. There is no evidence, however, that Sekhukhune's interest in Christianity ever extended much beyond a pleasure in theological and philosophical debate and discourse.[2]

Merensky, despite the example of the hostility encountered by Grützner at Gerlachshoop mission station amongst the Kopa as a result of the imposition of the missionaries on the society by the Lydenburg authorities, remained remarkably insensitive to the tensions created by the ambivalence of the missionaries' ultimate allegiance. In 1862,

---

[1] Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, pp. 112-3; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 119,

[2] B.M.B., 1863, pp. 404-6; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 42, 29.1.1862; p. 45, 2.2.1862; p. 70, 25.10.1862.

while Sekhukhune assembled the Pedi army, Merensky rode to him to warn him not to attack either Mabhogo or Boleu without first gaining the consent of the Boers. In the event, neither of these chieftaincies was under threat. The role of Merensky as a representative of Boer interests became increasingly clear, while Sekhukhune's initial concern to secure and retain the good will of the Boers was diminished by his growing security of tenure of office, and his exasperation at the failure of the Boers to effectively support the Pedi army in the attack on Mabhogo's stronghold in 1863. In 1863, Merensky's position was formalized and he was appointed as the representative of the Z.A.R. among the Pedi.[1] In 1864, during the first major round of conflicts between the converts at the capital and their fellows, Merensky was at Lydenburg in his capacity as representative of the Z.A.R., along with representatives of Sekhukhune attending a meeting with President Pretorius. When Merensky heard of the events at Thaba Mosego, he sought the assistance of the President who 'spoke sternly to Sekoekoeni's representatives and through them warned Sekoekoeni to beware that the same fate did not befall him that had befallen Maleo'.[2] Merensky repeated this message to the paramount on his return to the Pedi domain, and it seems likely that these threats did little to improve the standing of the Christians within the society. Certainly, by early 1864, Sekhukhune was describing the missionaries as 'people of the Boers', and his opinion of their good faith was probably little improved by Merensky's strategy of using the excuse of visits to the capital on official business to advance the work of the mission.[3] Indeed, it was on visits of this kind that

---

1 B.M.B., 1862, pp. 380-82; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 133; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 150.

2 Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, p. 117.

3 B.M.B., 1864, p. 354.

Merensky baptized both Dinkwanyane and Tlakale. Sekhukhune appears to have been particularly suspicious of Merensky, perhaps because of his close links with the Z.A.R., but he continued to value the missionaries as channels of communication and for their medical skills.[1]

It was in consequence of the medical services of the missionaries at the capital in 1864 during an outbreak of fever that the paramount gave Merensky permission to open a third mission station, Ga Ratau. While Sekhukhune was reluctant to permit Merensky to establish a station in the environs of the capital and, according to Nachtigal, expressed a preference for the latter as the missionary at Ga Ratau, Merensky was the senior of the two men. Partly because Christianity had had a greater impact at the capital than elsewhere in the polity, it had been a consistent ambition of the missionaries to open a station there. It also seems likely that the missionaries increasingly wished to gain overall control of the Christian community, something they were ill able to do while sited a day's journey from the capital and the bulk of the converts. Ga Ratau (the place of the lion) while not in the immediate vicinity of the capital, and situated in the area of hegemony of a subordinate chief - Sepeke - was within three hour's travel of Thaba Mosego.[2] The establishment of this station, however, was to be the last significant advance of the missionaries within the Pedi domain.

In the latter half of 1864, Sekhukhune and his aides began a vigorous campaign to halt the spread of Christianity. The complaints made against the Christians by subjects and subordinate chiefs, the conversion of royal agnates and affines, the increasingly compromised

---

1 B.M.B., 1864, pp. 359-60, 365.

2 B.M.B., 1864, pp. 366-7.

position of Merensky as a representative of the Z.A.R., and the manifest weakness of the Lydenburg authorities all whittled away at Sekhukhune's desire or resolve to continue to shield or accommodate the Christians. While he avoided acting directly against the missionaries, he set about curbing the activities of the converts. In June of 1864, they were forced to attend a pitso at Thaba Mosego which was attended by all the men from the capital and the surrounding villages. At this meeting the Christians were publicly reviled and, while Dinkwanyane and others of high rank were shielded from popular anger, Jakob Mantladi and Stephanus Maroti were flogged. During the course of the meeting, Sekhukhune rounded on Mantladi saying 'Jakob it is actually all your fault that all my people believe. You brought belief here from the old colony [the Cape]. The missionaries are nowhere near as responsible as you'.[1] In November, shortly after the baptism of Tlakale, Sekhukhune dramatically increased the level of pressure on the Christians to recant. He forbade them to work their land or to cut wood. Their guns, cattle and supplies of grain were seized by armed soldiers of the paramount, and they were ordered to leave the capital. This was presumably intended as a clear reminder to the converts of the extent to which their temporal fortunes at least remained dependent on the good will of the paramount. The Christians were forced to take refuge in the surrounding hills and when Merensky and Nachtigal went to plead with Sekhukhune to moderate his punishment, the paramount replied that he did not wish to quarrel with the missionaries, only with those of his subjects who professed Christianity. Nonetheless, even at this stage, Sekhukhune stopped well short of some of the more extreme demands of his subjects and advisers.[2]

---

[1] B.M.B., 1864, pp. 371-2; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 183-7; B.M.A., Abt. 3 Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 18.11.1864.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 190-95; Wangemann, Maleo en Sekoekoeni, pp. 120-24.

Merensky's response to this situation was to determine to leave the Pedi domain with the converts from the capital. This decision has been portrayed in the writings of Merensky and those who have drawn upon them as the inevitable consequence of the actions of the paramount. It is possible to argue, however, that these events prodded Merensky further along a path upon which he was already set. Any notion that the missionaries were personally at risk is not borne out by the evidence and there appears to have been no consensus amongst them that flight was the only feasible option. Nachtigal later recalled:

> When Br. Endemenn and I visited Merensky on the 10/11/1864 the latter said that we should all decide to leave our stations with our converts. When we hesitated he asked to be allowed to leave. He wanted to be the scapegoat. In this way he would emerge as a martyr and further his departure and his reluctance to negotiate with Sek. over his and his converts return would be well received in Berlin.[1]

There is evidence that Merensky had been contemplating leaving the area for some time, possibly to settle in Natal.[2] His motives were not simply those of self-aggrandisement, but probably a mounting frustration with the difficulties of working within an independent, intact African polity. The possibility of converting Sekhukhune, always remote, was minimal by 1864. He was entrenched in office and it was unlikely that a rival more sympathetic to the mission would succeed in supplanting him. While the paramount had no desire to alienate the missionaries entirely, he was also not prepared to facilitate their efforts and his last major concession, Ga Ratau, had not allowed Merensky direct access to, or control of, the Christian group at the capital. It must have been clear to Merensky that there was little chance of his image of an appropriate

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 978-9, 31.10.1890. See also, B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch Khalatlolu, 21.11.1864.

[2] Ibid.; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 202.

Christian community being realized within the Pedi domain. The elements of this vision emerged clearly in his subsequent founding of Botsabelo mission station. Nachtigal, however, continued to believe that the best interests of the mission would have been served by persevering within the Pedi heartland, and it seems that Wangemann initially may have shared this opinion.[1]

The hopes of Sekhukhune (and Nachtigal) that the Christians would return were not fulfilled. Small numbers continued to leave to join Merensky and the band of eighty-five adults and thirty children that had followed him from the area. Even within the environs of the capital a substantial number of converts chose to remain, but in 1865, Tlakale and two other wives of the paramount fled from the area via Khalatlolu, and later that year, another group of seven women left the capital to join the exiled Christians. Sekhukhune saw the remaining mission stations as wounds in the body politic through which his subjects continued to bleed away. If this was not in itself sufficient to persuade the paramount of the necessity of expelling the remaining missionaries, Nachtigal suggests a further and compelling reason: that those sections of the Boer community engaged in illicit arms trade with the Pedi feared that the missionaries would see fit to include reports of their activities in their letters to the Landdros at Lydenburg and thus strove to persuade Sekhukhune to close the mission stations. In December 1865 and January 1866, messengers from the paramount informed Knothe (who had taken over from Merensky at Ga Ratau) and Nachtigal of Sekhukhune's decision that they should leave, and Chief Maserumule told Endemann that he had received instructions from the paramount to expel him.[2] The

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 979-80.

[2] B.M.B., 1865, p.170; B.M.B., 1867, pp. 230-42, 251-6; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 249, 3.1.1866.

closure of these stations came to shape the reality and the mythology of the development of the B.M.S. in the Transvaal and the growth of Christianity within Pedi society. The antagonism between Sekhukhune and certain of the missionaries also played an important part in the conflicts that developed in the eastern Transvaal in the following decade. Twenty-five years later, with Sekhukhune safely dead, the power of the Pedi polity broken, and Merensky's attentions focused elsewhere in Africa, Nachtigal mused, ambivalently, in his diary:

> Sek. was, when one views him quite objectively as a heathen sovereign, in the right when he grew angry and drove us from the land.[1]

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 978, 31.10.1890.

SECTION THREE

THE Z.A.R. DOMAIN

CHAPTER SIX

THE Z.A.R. DOMAIN.

LAND, LABOUR AND LEGISLATION

Introduction

Just as the early history of the Pedi polity was shaped by the difaqane and its aftermath, and the initial impact of the arrival of the Trekkers in the Transvaal, so its continued development requires an examination of the wider processes of conflict and change at work within the region. In particular the movement of population into the area of authority of the Maroteng paramountcy, and the extent to which groups resident in zones of previously dual or Z.A.R. hegemony claimed undivided loyalty to Sekhukhune, was an index of wider struggles which developed between the Z.A.R. and initially subject societies, landlords and tenants, and masters and servants, over rights to land, labour, rent and tax. The Pedi political system was the product of a complex interplay of struggles within and beyond its borders, and by the early 1870s it had emerged as an alternative focus of power to both the Swazi kingdom and the Z.A.R. It is for this reason necessary in this chapter to look beyond the Pedi polity and to explore the wider and changing relationships and conditions in the Transvaal which contributed to its 'expansion' and played an important role in determining its history.

PART ONE

Land and Labour in the Eastern Transvaal in the 1850s and 1860s

In the 1850s and 1860s, the settlers who remained in the eastern Transvaal steadily abandoned the fever-ridden north-eastern area and retreated to the higher-lying lands to the south. The highveld proved much better suited to sheep and cattle-keeping while the lowveld and bushveld continued to provide winter grazing, game and wood. Some individuals remained wedded almost exclusively to the hunting economy but trade in the productsof the hunt, particularly in ivory, declined. By the 1860s, the highveld areas supported substantial flocks and some trade in wool developed from the region. There was also a limited trade in cattle but it was hampered by the distances to viable markets and stock diseases and other factors which kept the rate of increase of herds low. Agricultural products also played a part in exchange, but in the absence of local markets, the Lydenburgers were dependent on Orange Free State sheep farmers for purchasers for their wheat, tobacco and dried fruit. It was also partly through this trade that eastern Transvaal farmers built up their flocks. However, even by Transvaal standards, the region remained an economic backwater in these years.[1]

The land agreements of the 1840s meant that, notionally at least, a vast area of land was at the disposal of the settlers. Amongst the most important items of cultural baggage that the Trekkers brought with them to the Transvaal was a legal system which enshrined private ownership of land. They also held the ideal that all burghers (citizens) should own land. The view taken was that all men who had participated in the

---

[1] Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 22-38; Potgieter, 'Omgewing', p. 43; Aylward, Transvaal, pp. 14-15, 118-9, 123, 126; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 221-3, 243, 290-91.

Trek were entitled to two farms. This profligate distribution of the one truly abundant resource of the Z.A.R. could not continue indefinitely, and in 1866 it was resolved that automatic entitlement to land would not apply to new settlers. In 1868 and 1871 it was decided to close the allocation of land on the basis of burgher rights but the struggle to persuade individuals to register their claims to farms continued into the 1890s.[1]

The method of distribution of land was that burghers selected farms and then provided a description of them to the local Landdros who noted the detail (often highly imprecise) in his aantekening boek (registration book) and gave the claimant a certified copy of this called an uittreksel. Inspection commissions were periodically appointed to establish the boundaries of farms in particular areas and land had to be inspected before transfer of title and the issue of deeds.[2]

While these provisions ostensibly provided the framework for an even-handed distribution of land within the Boer community, the distribution of land which in fact took place, was anything but equitable. Twin processes of the accumulation of farms and growing landlessness rapidly became evident.

Landlessness amongst such plenty seems paradoxical, especially as it was not reserved to those who were not entitled to burgher rights. Individuals failed to register land claims and sold both deeds and uittreksels. There were a number of reasons for this cavalier attitude. For some the initial abundance of land probably diminished the importance of securing title to specific pieces of land. Land without capital, labour or viable markets was of limited value and for many of those who registered burgher rights or even had farms inspected, the only profit

---

1 Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 61-105.

2 Ibid.; R. Cornwell, 'Land and politics in the Transvaal in the 1880s' I.C.S., S.A. Seminar 4, 1973, pp. 30-32.

the land was likely to yield in the foreseeable future was through its sale. It was principally hunting that provided a marketable product in the early years of settlement and hunting demanded mobility rather than control over, and title to, specific farms. In addition, to have land inspected and deeds issued entailed costs and a liability to demands for payment of land tax. A more feasible option for those who sought access to land was to settle on or near land occupied by men of substance and position. In return for their clientship, they secured access to labour, were assured of protection from attack and guaranteed a supply of essential commodities. Of crucial importance, however, was the fact that access to land was not dependent on the possession of legal title and the terms upon which individuals gained access to land were probably initially only marginally affected by the presence or absence of formal rights.[1]

Although a great deal of research remains to be done on land accumulation, a pioneering study by Trapido has supplied some of the framework and Cornwell has provided a detailed analysis for the Wakkerstroom district. Their analyses can also be fleshed out with additional material from the Lydenburg district. A partial market in land existed from the beginnings of Trekker settlement beyond the Vaal. Low land values enabled those with some capital to accumulate the land rights disposed of by those unable or unwilling to retain them. The men in a position to accumulate land were often also officers of the state, and were thus in a position to ensure that their rights or title were validated and to have inside knowledge of the land market. In the absence of alternatives, the state also rewarded services rendered to it in land and granted farms to officials in lieu of salaries. An

---

[1] Naude, 'Boerdery, pp. 61-105; Cornwell, 'Land', pp. 31-3; Van Jaarsveld, 'Veldkornet', p. 249.

example of accumulation through these means in the Lydenburg area was provided by H. Bührmann (Landdros from 1849-1851, Secretary to the Volksraad and subsequently a member of that body) who by 1869 was the owner of eighteen farms. It was not only officials who accumulated land however. Some individuals speculated with, and invested the income from hunting and trading activities in land. By 1877, seven farms had, for example, passed through the hands of D.J.G. Coetzee, who played a prominent role in eastern Transvaal trading networks.[1]

It was, however, not only freehold farms which were the object of speculation. In 1858 the Volksraad resolved that all land that had not been given out was the property of the state. In 1860, a decision was taken which reads rather like a speculator's charter. No doubt partly in order to raise revenue for the state, but also to the undoubted advantage of those dealing in land, it was stipulated that apart from a freehold farm, each burgher could lay claim to one or more lenings plaatsen (quit-rent farms). This enabled some individuals to accumulate truly massive landholdings. The Landdros clerk of Marthinus Wesselstroom, Johannes Vos, managed to secure 120 of these farms by 1866. Though few managed to equal this particularly spectacular land-grab, lenings plaatsen played a part in enabling others (including those mentioned above) to establish substantial landholdings. However, for many, the annual quit-rent (usually 30 shillings) meant that the incentive to retain lenings plaatsen was probably even less than to retain freehold farms, and a brisk trade in lenings plaatsen was the consequence.[2]

---

[1] Cornwell, 'Land', pp. 29-40; S. Trapido, 'The South African Republic: Class Formation and the State, 1850-1900', I.C.S., S.A. Seminar 3, 1972, pp. 53-65; T.A., LL 73, Register of owners of farms; LL 3, Bührmann to Landdros, 24.12.1869.

[2] Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 67-8.

The most striking feature of the land books of the Landdros of Lydenburg, however, is the extent to which land had passed into the hands of individuals and companies based in the Cape and Natal. By annexation, in the Lydenburg area alone, Parker Wood and Company owned portions of seventeen farms; the Harmony Company owned forty farms; and, on the borders of the district, A.L. Devenish owned twenty farms. Aside from these and other large land-holders, the books are scattered with English names and while some of these individuals may have been resident in the Transvaal many, probably most, were resident in the British colonies.[1] In the space of thirty years, the attempts which had characterised the early period of settlement to exclude foreigners from holding land in the Z.A.R. had been utterly undermined, and by 1877, vast tracts had passed into alien hands. A petition from inhabitants of the Lydenburg district in 1873 complained that

> We find that some of the most eligible and beautiful lands in the Republic are owned by non residents, people residing in the neighbouring colonies and in Europe who have no interest in the development of the country further than in the enhanced value it gives to their land.[2]

There were a number of ways in which land passed into the hands of individuals and companies based outside the Transvaal. One of the most important was through the activities of traders. Some accumulated land rights as the result of the indebtedness of their customers, others bought or bartered them as a part of their wider commercial activities, disposing of them on their return to their place of origin. By the 1870s, some individuals may even have specialised in this trade in land rights. While all the major market towns probably witnessed some

---

1 T.A., LL 73, Register of owners of farms.

2 T.A., S.S. 161, R1580/73, Petition, signed by Jansen and 91 others, 12.9.1873.

activity of this kind, it is best described for Kimberley. Dicke writes

> At first the rights to Transvaal farms went cheaply, a bottle of brandy, cheap cape smoke, later the rights rose in value from a horse (£5) to a horse with a saddle and bridle, to a wagon complete with a span of draught oxen ... [burghers] could not make a living on their farms, the farms were of no value to them. And as they could not make a living in the Transvaal they left it [many going to Kimberley].[1]

Dicke's blend of fact and fiction in his romantic account of northern Transvaal history is a decidedly shaky foundation for an account of this process. R. Southey, Leiutenant Governor of Griqualand West provides contemporary and probably more reliable evidence of the land sales at Kimberley. In 1873 he wrote

> A Boer or any other resident in the Transvaal makes a request to the Government for the grant of a farm, or it may be a dozen farms [after the land is inspected] a certificate is issued which serves as a title ... and the grantee has to pay a quitrent of 30/- a year. Hundreds of such farms are continually being offered for sale here and many are sold. About 100 were offered by public sale last Saturday but no offers were made. I believe that the sellers would take £25 each if they could get it.[2]

Part of the significance of this pattern of land ownership for the history of the north eastern Transvaal lay in the fact that it applied as markedly in areas of predominantly African settlement and within the domains of effectively independent African polities and in contested areas as it did in zones of white settlement and control. As has been noted earlier, the Trekkers considered that the agreement they had concluded with the Swazi gave them ultimate control and ownership of the land. This notional ownership of the land was used to justify the demands for labour and tribute that were made with varying degrees of success on African societies. Even those societies sufficiently strong

---

[1] Dicke, The Bush, p. 324.

[2] C.A., G.L.W. 182, Southey to Barkly, 16.10.1873.

enough to resist Boer exactions were unable however to prevent the process whereby the land upon which they lived was transformed into freehold and quit-rent farms. After the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, Henrique Shepstone observed

> The late government when it took possession of the land and found it occupied by natives made no provision in land for their location but granted the land away in farms over the heads of the natives living on it.[1]

While this was contrary to a Volksraad resolution of 1852 which stipulated that all land on which large 'kaffir kraals' were situated should be inspected for the government and considered as quit-rent farms, this resolution both denied Africans ultimate ownership of the land on which they lived and was in any case rarely applied and regularly flouted. By the early 1850s, the aantekening and inspection of farms situated in the core areas and on the margins of African chiefdoms was under way. The consequences of this for the Kopa and Ndzundza Ndebele chiefdoms was baldly stated in a missionary report of 1860. 'The Boers regarded these as Swazi subjects, did not trouble themselves further about them and took land where they pleased'.[2]

It seems probable that for some Boers there were significant potential advantages to be gained from laying claim to land on which Africans were settled. Such land was likely to be relatively fertile and well-watered. The fact of settlement provided supplies of labour to owners who were able to impose their will. For some, and particularly those who succeeded in securing extensive land holdings, African settlement provided a potential source of revenue and the possibility of additional supplies of labour. The Kopa, for example, were expected to pay rent in

---

[1] T.A., S.N. 2, 297/79, Memo. on the Native Population of the Transvaal, H.C. Shepstone, n.d., 1879.

[2] B.M.B., 1860, p. 341.

cash, kind and labour to the owners of the land upon which they lived. The practice that developed in the region was that five families of a group settled on a farm were expected to render unpaid labour service to the owner but were then spared from further demands on their labour or their produce by officials or neighbouring Boers. Groups invoked the authority of the Ndzundza chief Mabhogo to support their refusal to meet these demands and responded to attempts to enforce their compliance by removing themselves, and on occasion the landowner's stock, to the core area of the Ndebele chiefdom. The pressures also contributed to the mounting recalcitrance of the Kopa and Ndebele in response to the commands of landowners and officials. The Ndebele ruler, Mabhogo, denied the validity of Boer claims to the land and refused to recognize their right to levy demands for rent and tribute.[1]

By the late 1850s, these conflicts in conjunction with the changed balance of power in the region and the disputes within the Z.A.R. which led to the establishment of an independent Republic of Lydenburg in 1856, gave added urgency to the need to regularise relationships with more powerful African chiefdoms. The Lydenburgers could no longer expect the military assistance of burghers from other districts in the settlement of local disputes. They also needed to raise revenue through taxation and to ensure supplies of labour. The response to the impasse in their relations with the Ndzundza and the Kopa was to hire or purchase some of the land upon which these groups lived from its owners. In return, they were expected to recognize their obligations as subjects of the Republic and a tax of two shillings and six pence per annum was demanded from each

---

[1] Ibid.; T.A. L 13, List of farms and rents, 18.1.1860; L 12, Grobler to Landdros, 27.12.1859; L 19, Report, Potgieter, 26.11.1859; S.S. R. 85/69, Minutes of Meeting, 19.12.1859; L 19, Report, Nel, 12.3.1861; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 136-7.

married man. The Ndzundza were unwilling to meet these conditions and in July of 1860, Commandant General van Dijk ordered them to leave the farms on which they lived within eight days, or to risk a commando being launched against them. However, three years passed before the Lydenburgers, by then re-incorporated into the Z.A.R., were able to muster sufficient support to launch an attack on the Ndebele stronghold. During this time, the Ndzundza had had ample time to prepare for war and had been joined in their resistance by the Kopa.[1] The Kopa were decimated by a Swazi attack launched at the behest of the Z.A.R., but the Ndebele withstood siege by Boer commandos and a combined Boer and Pedi attack.

By 1864, these incessant conflicts had had serious consequences for those Boers settled in the environs of the Ndzundza chiefdom. Agricultural and pastoral production had been disrupted by periods of time spent in laager in anticipation of Kopa and Ndebele raids and counter-attacks; they had suffered losses of stock and lung-sickness threatened to deplete herds still further, and there appeared to be little likelihood of effective assistance from either their fellow burghers or the Swazi or Pedi. They thus faced the choice of trekking away, remaining in laager or coming to terms with the fact that it was the Ndzundza Ndebele chiefdom which exercised effective authority over the land upon which they had settled. While many took the first option, those that remained decided to attempt to negotiate an agreement with Mabhogo. They discovered that

> Mapog is for peace if the people [Boers] are prepared to pay Mapog one beast for each house because it is his land ... He said that he had said earlier that it was his land ... and he would fight to his death for it.[2]

---

[1] Ibid.; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 214-17; T.A., S.S. R. 3857/60, Van Dijk to Grobler, 25.7.1860.

[2] T.A., LL 2, Nel to Potgieter, 6.5.1865; see also, S.S. 55, R.220/64, Petition Van Dijk and 20 others, 22.4.1864; LL 2, State Secretary to Landdros, 28.6.1865.

Despite the opposition of the Landdros of Lydenburg and the subsequent disapproval of the Uitvoerende Raad these burghers agreed to pay forty head of cattle to the Ndebele ruler, of which at least thirty were handed over. Although the contributors clearly hoped that this and subsequent payments secured their rights to their farms, Mabhogo's successor argued that they represented tribute rather than payment for purchased land.[1] In either case, by the mid-1860s, a conflict which had been fuelled by the claims of officials and citizens of the Z.A.R. and the Lydenburg Republic to ownership of the land on which the Kopa and Ndebele lived had provoked a response which had led to a section of the Boer community being forced to recognize the weight of Ndebele claims to the land.

The manifest fiction of Z.A.R. claims to authority over the Pedi polity did not prevent farms being claimed and inspected in the heartland and on the periphery of the Pedi domain. In the late 1840s, with Sekwati's consent, a handful of Boers settled north of the Steelpoort River. While outbreaks of fever led to the hasty abandonment of these settlements by the early 1850s, claims to land in that area had been registered and even inspected. In the early 1860s, the military vulnerability of the Lydenburgers persuaded the Volksraad to open the district to claims of burghers from other regions to land rights. While it was hoped that the availability of land would encourage settlement in the area, settlement was not a precondition for claiming these rights to land. The anticipation was that this move would encourage support from residents of other areas for the defence of the district, and for the subjection of Boleu and Mabhogo. At least two of the areas set aside for this purpose impinged on the heartland of the Pedi polity.[2]

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 1097, R.4128/89, enc. R. 3287/80, Report of H.C. Shepstone, 19.5.1880.

[2] T.A., S.S. 40. Suppl. Stukke, Petition to Volksraad, 27.1.1862; S.S. 45, R.62/62, State Secretary to Landdros, 17.5.1862; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 4.

By the late 1860s, the unclaimed land in the district was rapidly being exhausted. The remaining unallotted areas were mainly situated in the most inhospitable parts of the lowveld or in the Pedi domain. The decision of the Volksraad to halt land claims in 1868 added pressures to secure title to land and even where taking possession of the land was clearly out of the question, the possibility remained of securing control of it in the future or of selling the notional farm. From 1868 onwards, the land books of the Landdros of Lydenburg reveal a marked upswing in the tempo of the inspection of farms in the district and some of the farms clearly fell within the Pedi heartland.[1] By the late 1860s and early 1870s, there was also an increasing need among the growing body of highveld farmers to secure their access to the resources of winter grazing, wood and game contained within the bushveld and lowveld which probably also encouraged the establishment of title to land in northern reaches of the district and on the periphery of the Pedi domain. Probably most significant of all was the rise in land values in the region consequent upon the discovery of gold in the north-eastern Transvaal in the late 1860s, which led to a quickening pace of land speculation.

Clear evidence of the extent to which land to the north of the Steelpoort had been claimed comes from the late 1860s and early 1870s. Nachtigal wrote to the Landdros of Lydenburg in early 1870 requesting permission to register the sites of the abandoned mission stations in the Pedi domain in the name of the B.M.S. Part of his justification for doing so was that many others had claimed land in the area. In the same year, Merensky wrote that this process was so far advanced that

---

[1] T.A., LL 60-65; LL 19; also, part 3, below.

'the whole of the western portion of ... the Pedi heartland has in this way come into the ownership of the whites'.[1] Southey, whose description of the sale of rights to Transvaal farms in Kimberly has been quoted extensively above, believed 'Most of the hundred farms offered for sale are in Sequati's country ... Sequati I believe is dead and a son called Sekukuni or some such is now the chief'.[2] 'Most' was probably an overstatement, but 'some' would be a convincing substitution.

For those within or beyond the borders of the Transvaal who gained title to this land and who were aware of its location, the hope remained that if and when the Pedi were defeated, new possibilities for profit would emerge. In a report written in 1878, Captain Marshall Clarke provided the British administration with a summary of the past and a glimpse of the future.

> Not merely do the Boers now occupy farms claimed by the natives (often without just reason), but farm rights have been taken out and actually inspected within the present native locations. When the natives are taught subjection, the Boers will claim their farms on which they have hitherto not dared to trespass, and either take possession of them themselves or demand rent and service from the occupiers.[3]

In the early 1870s, however, the 'natives' were far from subdued and a growing awareness of the ongoing legal alienation of land in the heartland and periphery of the Pedi domain played a part in shaping the responses and land claims of the rulers of the Pedi polity. In the longer term, however, the pattern of property rights established in this period were underwritten and enforced by the British administration (1877-1881) and the subsequent Republican state, a fact which had profound consequences for the society.

---

1 T.A., S.S., 360, R.16/1870, Merensky to State Secretary, 20.12.1869; LL 180, Nachtigal to Landdros, 29.1.1870.

2 C.A., G.L.W. 182, Southey to Barkly, 16.10.1873.

3 C.2316, No. 6, Memo. on the political situation existing in the Lydenburg district, M. Clarke, 15.12.1878.

By the early 1860s, the changed and changing balance of power in the eastern Transvaal had led to a situation where some Boer claims to land had to be abandoned or pursued with circumspection and the possibilities for using direct coercion to secure labour were also much reduced. African groups settled within the area over which the Z.A.R. held sway were liable to respond to labour coercion by removing to the Pedi and Ndzundza domains. The more prudent Boers, and probably the wealthier and those fortunate enough to have large settlements on their lands, could hope to retain their labour by moderating the extent and regularity of their demands. They also sought to increase the labour at their command by encouraging additional settlement on their land.

In this context, the importance of securing hired labour also increased. Probably the most important means of securing a share in the limited supply of this form of labour was through establishing relationships of alliance, exchange and, to some extent, clientage with more powerful chiefs. The annual payments made by farmers who remained in the vicinity of the Ndzundza to Mabhogo were probably partly designed to ensure access to some labour. The supply of labour was also part of a wider set of exchanges in which trade in arms and ammunition also played an important role. Those who obtained their labour in this fashion had the additional advantage that the participation of chiefs militated against the desertion of hired labour, and chiefs also mediated in disputes between farmers and their subjects.[1] The chiefs' control over the labour supply also gave them a means of establishing and maintaining political ties with members of the Lydenburg community.

---

[1] T.A., LL 1, Sekoekoeni to Landdros (Merensky's handwriting), 10.1.1863; B.M.B., 1861, pp. 368-9.

Clarke, in his report in 1878, described how

> Each chief chose some friend or counsellor who kept him acquainted of all that passed, advised him in his political relations and warned him of any impending danger. The agent and his family were free from molestation and also obtained servants on better terms than his neighbours.[1]

The situation in the eastern Transvaal was not, however, typical of the Transvaal as a whole. In the more densely settled and controlled heartland of the Z.A.R., the central, south and western districts, a different picture had emerged by the mid-1860s. African societies in these areas had been profoundly disrupted by the difaqane and were unable to retain or regain their independence by military means after the arrival of the Trekkers. As in the eastern Transvaal little land was reserved for African occupation. A missionary who arrived in the Rustenburg district in 1866 found, for example, that Africans were 'living on Boer farms in kraals and had not an inch of ground which they could call their own'.[2] With the transformation of the land upon which they lived and produced into Boer property, came demands for rent, mainly in labour but also in produce, cash and cattle. Larger groups and those living on land belonging to absentee owners were also unable to evade the demands for labour made upon them by Veldcornets and other officials. The position of some officials was made still more oppressive by the fact that they combined the authority of office with that of being owners of portions of the land upon which their subjects resided.[3]

1 C. 2316, No. 6, Memo on the political situation existing in the Lydenburg district, M. Clarke, 15.12.1878.

2 T.A., S.N. 31, S.R. 260/95, Penzhorn to S.N., 6.2.1895.

3 See T.A., S.S. 139, Suppl. Stukke 71, Commissie voor Kafferzaken, in particular 91/71, evidence of S. Prinsloo, 94/71, Skinner, 101/71, T. Erasmus, 103/71, David, 104/71, Andries Maubane, 105/71, Chief Swaartbooi, 106/71, Otto Sachse, 107/71, Ganin, 108/71, H.C. Penzhorn, 109/71, P.J. Van der Walt, 116/71, S.J.P. Kruger. The role of Kruger as land speculator, landlord and official, emerges particularly clearly from the evidence of Rustenburg missionaries and officials to this commission.

The case of chief Andries Maubane and his followers who lived in the Pretoria district provides an example of the burdens imposed on some groups. In their instance the land upon which they lived had, in the 1850s, come into the ownership of a consortium of Boers including the local Veldcornet and subsequently the Commandant of the district, Salomon Prinsloo. In 1870, Andries and some of his subjects dictated a petition to the B.M.S. missionary Otto Sachse detailing their plight.

> For fourteen years we have been under contract ... the contract stipulated that for a certain time all families and the young and old would be obliged to render labour to the people who had entered into the contract on the basis of their rights as owners of the land ... But we ourselves contributed eighty-eight head of cattle to the purchase price and we were promised that we would be able to regard and treat the land as our own; we have since that time had to make frequent payments, most of us have never been paid the smallest amount for years of service. Now the contract has been renewed, we have had to pay forty head of cattle, twenty sheep and goats and a portion of grain, we have received a list of another £157 which has to be paid; we have to pay tax every year and have to do commando service, are barred from working for people who have not bought a right to the land for one head of cattle and have to work for most masters for nothing and have to hand over what we can earn from other people to our masters. We cannot continue under these circumstances, and would rather leave the land. We believe that we have already paid off the value of the land more than once.[1]

African societies in these districts, while denied the possibility of effective military resistance did not meekly accept their lot. Some groups attempted to purchase title to the land upon which they lived in order to evade or reduce the level of exactions. Others threatened to and did leave the sphere of authority of the Z.A.R.[2]

---

[1] S.S., R.1486/70, Sachse to Volksraad, 4.12.1876.

[2] See part 3, below.

PART TWO

Inboekselings

The partial failure of attempts to gain labour supplies by other means and from other sources added to the importance of inboekselings within Boer society. Descriptions of the Boer labour force in the eastern Transvaal in the 1850s and 1860s reveal that they played a vital role. In 1860 the missionaries reported that they constituted a majority of the labourers which the Boers had at their disposal and ten years later Merensky commented that inboekselings and labour tenants were the major sources of labour. The attempts and concern of the Boers to control and retain their inboekselings played a central part in shaping their relationship with the Pedi polity and the trade in children was also an important, if partially submerged, dimension to the local and regional political economy. The increasing difficulty the Boers experienced in securing and holding inboekselings was also a factor in their intensified attempts to secure labour in the late 1860s and early 1870s which contributed to the conflicts which developed in the eastern Transvaal.[1]

The children who were incorporated into Boer-dominated society as inboekselings were captured, demanded as tribute, bartered and bought for cash. In the eastern Transvaal the first two methods played an important role during the early period of settlement but, partly in consequence of the changing regional balance of power between Boer and African society, the bulk of the children acquired in the 1850s and 1860s were secured through exchange. The fact that exchange increased in importance does not, of course, mean that force and violence ceased to be central to the transition from African child to inboekseling.

---

[1] B.M.B., 1860, p. 342; B.M.B., 1870, p. 369.

The Boers, too weak themselves to seize children, and anxious to regularise relationships with neighbouring African societies, came to depend on the coercive capacity of others.[1]

Although reports of children seized by commandos are common, descriptions of the manner in which capture was effected are rare. Probably the fullest account available is contained in the life history of the inboekseling Mozane (Valentyn) recorded by Nachtigal in the late 1860s. While the events described took place in Natal in the late 1830s, they serve to introduce individuals who subsequently settled in the eastern Transvaal and whose lives will be used to illustrate many of the points which follow. They probably also illuminate some of the techniques employed later north of the Vaal.

In the confusion and chaos that prevailed in the aftermath of the Boer defeat of Dingane in 1839, numbers of Zulu women and children took refuge in caves and gorges. One such woman was Mpindo who hid along with her four children for three days without food:

> Then the followers of Mpande arrived. They sat below the fugitives among the bushes, slaughtered an ox and started to roast the flesh, giving the impression that they had come to assist the refugees. Two of Mpindo's children, Mozane and Nzunzu, were so attracted by the sight and smell of food that they left their hiding place to join them. The warriors were very kind to them and more and more went out to join them. Finally, when no more children emerged, the warriors enticed the children further and further away from the hiding places. Then, suddenly, a group of Boers on horseback appeared nearby and although the children wanted to flee it was now too late. They were captured and taken to the Boer laager where quaking with fear, they awaited execution. To their great relief they were not killed but were given food.[2]

---

[1] For a fuller exposition of the material and argument presented in this part of the chapter and for a critical discussion of the existing literature see P. Delius, 'Inboekselings', unpub. seminar paper presented to Peasant to Worker Seminar, Q.E.H., Oxford, June 1979, and P. Delius and S. Trapido, 'Inboekselings and Oorlams, the creation and transformation of a servile class', forthcoming. I have benefited from discussions with Dr. Trapido on many of the points which follow.

[2] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 652-3.

The tactics employed to effect capture were not always this subtle, and it was also not only formally constituted commandos which seized children. In fact, the boundary between a hunting party and a raiding party was often blurred during the early years of settlement in the eastern Transvaal.

From the early 1860s, the Boers who settled in the eastern Transvaal became dependent on trading rather than raiding for their supply of children.[1] In the early phase there was some trade in children from Delagoa Bay and there is also evidence that the Shangane state played some part in the trade.[2] However, the records of both the Landdros of Lydenburg and the Berlin Missionary Society show that the Swazi kingdom was the principal source of supply to the Boers in the eastern Transvaal in the 1850s and 1860s. Bonner's research on this period of Swazi history has done much to illuminate the nature of and reasons for the kingdom's participation in this trade. He argues that in its earliest stages, captives were handed over to cement the political alliance that was developing with the Boers. The captives were taken during attacks on communities within the kingdom's domain and from groups beyond its boundaries who fell victim to Swazi raids. Internal captive-taking was largely a by-product of the rationalization of economic and political control which characterized the early phase of Mswati's rule. Once this process was complete, internal captive-taking largely ceased. Thereafter, Swazi raids on the societies of the lowveld and into southern Mozambique (the latter partly stemming from the Swazi intervention in the Shangane war of succession) provided the bulk of the captives and the basis for

---

[1] However, an important sub-theme in the 1850s and 1860s was the capture of and coerced trade in children of communities described as 'bushmen' in the sources. Some voluntary trade probably also took place. See T.A., LL 1, Steyn to Landdros, 1.2.1863; LL 177, Declarations of J.A. Grobler and M.S. Grobler, 16.2.1863; S.S., Suppl. Stukke 1870, Scheepers to State Secretary, 28.2.1870.

[2] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 886, 895.

the boom in the supply of children to the Boers in the early 1860s. Even at its peak, however, it is unlikely that the trade exceeded one or two hundred children a year. In return for these, the Swazi rulers received hunting dogs, cattle, blankets and, at the beginning and to a lesser extent, guns and horses.[1]

The involvement of the Swazi kingdom in this trade raises the question of why the other major polity in the eastern Transvaal, the Pedi paramountcy, did not participate. While a full explanation for this divergent response would demand a detailed comparative analysis of these societies which cannot be embarked upon in this context, it is nonetheless possible to point to some important differences. No major restructuring of internal relationships of power took place within the Pedi polity and it was not in a position to engage in extensive raiding. Swazi raids generated a supply of captives which enabled them to trade on a relatively large scale without jeopardizing their military or productive capacity and which at times may have proved difficult to rapidly or effectively absorb within Swazi society. The Pedi were intent on building up their military and productive capacity with an eye to resisting the Swazi, the Zulu and the Trekkers. Within the polity the ability to attract and retain dependents played a crucial role in a situation in which different chiefdoms and different levels of authority within them strove to expand the population under their control. Particularly significant in this context was the fact that mathupya (captives) were under the protection of chiefs and that Pedi rulers encouraged the influx of refugees into their domain. Migrant labour enabled the Pedi to secure the commodities which the Swazi gained through raiding and trading.

---

[1] B.M.B., 1860, p. 342; T.A., LL 177 and LL 179; Bonner, 'The Swazi', pp. 153-85.

Not only is there evidence of an extensive trade in children in the eastern Transvaal but there are also indications that some individuals specialized in this trade. Reference has already been made to the activities of D.J.G. Coetzee who played a prominent role in supplying his fellow burghers with children and in a variety of other political and trading relationships with the Swazi and the Pedi. Officials, and particularly those entrusted with responsibility for relations with African societies were particularly well placed to benefit from the trade. J.M. de Beer appointed as Diplomatic Agent in 1864 both traded children and received children from the Swazi destined for President Pretorius. Succeeding Landdroses of Lydenburg, H.F. Bührmann and C. Potgieter, obtained at least sixteen and seven children respectively.[1]

The evidence also suggests, however, that the eastern Transvaal trade in inboekselings was probably a sub-theme in a wider trading system by the 1860s. It appears that trade from the Zoutpansberg region played a crucial role in meeting the demand for inboekselings in the central, western and probably to a lesser extent, the eastern Transvaal. It was also in this arena that specialist traders had most clearly emerged. An indication of the scale of this trade is provided by the estimate which the missionaries Grützner and Merensky obtained when they visited the Zoutpansberg in 1866. They were told that up to a thousand children were entered into the contract book at the Landdros's office each year. Any exaggeration indulged in by these missionaries' informants was probably compensated for by the fact that if Lydenburg practice was replicated in the Zoutpansberg, the bulk of children acquired were never entered into a contract book. A further comparative

---

[1] S.S. 200, R.3032/75, Nachtigal to State President, 11.2.1875; S.S., R.466/65, de Beer to Pretorius, 17.4.1865; T.A., LL, 179, entries, 9.2.1866, 14.2.1866, 20.2.1866; LL 177, Van Niekerk, 20.2.1862.

dimension is supplied by the fact that only four hundred and eighty children were entered into the Lydenburg contract book in the sixteen years it was in use.[1]

A full exposition of the reasons for the dominant role of the Zoutpansberg in the inboekseling trade cannot be attempted in this context, and is also partly dependent on the research still in progress.[2] However, it is likely that the continuing vitality of a hunting and raiding economy in the northern Transvaal played some part in ensuring the supply of captives through the 1850s, but that these were principally disposed of locally. In the early 1860s, for a complex of reasons, the ability of the northern Boer communities to secure ivory cheaply declined. At the same time the demand for labour grew in the regions to the south. In this changed context, black ivory (a widely employed euphemism for African children) came to rival the conventional kind as an item of trade. In 1871, the German explorer and scientist Karl Mauch, while staying in the Zoutpansberg, recorded a revealing account of this transition and the nature of the trade in his diary.

> As hunting for white ivory was not so profitable these suggestions that children should be traded to the south were welcome and ... those that participated in the trade ... received a compensation which rose higher and higher in value... The profits to be made attracted the speculator who secured a supply of children ... and with these ... started his journey to the south-west. Baskets, carpets and wooden boxes were used to hide this human freight from the eyes of the public. Arrangements were made under the cover of night with satisfactory results. The business appeared to be very profitable therefore another attempt was made. The slave trade had arrived.[3]

The trade was, however, far from entirely covert and Grützner who was resident in Makapanspoort in the mid-1860s later recalled that wagon-loads

---

[1] S.S. 184, R.436/75, Grützner to State President, 10.2.1875 and S.S. 200, R. 3032/75, Nachtigal to State President, 11.2.1875.

[2] R. Wagner's forthcoming Ph.D. thesis (London) on the Buys family will help to clarify the picture; see also, Wagner, 'Zoutpansberg', pp.32-42.

[3] E. Burke (ed), Journals of Karl Mauch, 1869-1872 (Salisbury, 1969), pp.113-4 for this quote and a wider discussion of the history of the region. Also, P. Hunt, Het Lot der Zwarten in Transvaal (Amsterdam, 1868)

of children were regularly brought to the town.[1]

There is virtually no evidence that this trade involved adult captives. While some women were seized during raids few were successfully retained within Boer society and adult males were rarely taken captive. The Boer communities in the Transvaal lacked the means to integrate or control adult captives and, in common with some other societies in Africa which practised domestic forms of slavery, sought young children. These, although of course not entirely unformed by their societies of origin, were partially socialised within Boer-dominated society and were thus distanced culturally as well as physically from the communities whence they had been taken. However, partly in order to ensure that they could be retained in a servile position, these individuals were denied full participation within Boer society and so underwent contradictory processes of incorporation and exclusion. An understanding of these processes is essential to an account of the position of inboekselings, and by continuing with the history of Mozane (Valentyn) it is possible to focus on the nature of the transition from captive to inboekseling. After their capture by Boers in 1839 the

> ... children soon realised that each had a Boer as a master and these gave them new names. Mozane who was then eight years old was from thenceforth called Valentyn. His brother Nzunzu was called Kibit and his sister Lutika was called Kaatjie. Valentyn and Kaatjie belonged to a Boer called Gerrit Schoeman. Eventually they became used to their new masters and their new life and were no longer as distressed as they had been when they were seized. Valentyn was given over to play with and attend to the young Hermanus Steyn whose father had been murdered by Dingaan. The young white Hermanus and the young black Valentyn soon got to know one another and were always together. They caught mice and roasted and ate the birds

---

[1] S.S. 184, R.436/75, Grützner to State President, 10.2.1875.

> and locusts which they captured. They raided hives and removed the honey. The one learned from the other, bad as well as good.[1]

Acculturation was by no means one-sided.

The close relationship which existed between these youths gives an indication of the kinds of bonds which could be formed between inboekselings and individual Boers. In the majority of cases, however, existing clients and inboekselings played a central role in the education and care of newly acquired children. A stratum, therefore, existed within Boer society comprised of individuals of diverse origins but who were increasingly bound together by their common position within the relations of production and by their shared experience of the dominant Boer culture and the culture created by the under-classes in Boer society. In 1860, the Berlin Missionary Society established a school in Lydenburg for servants from the town and its environs. It was attended by twenty-five 'coloureds' who by origin were 'Bushmen, Hottentots, Zulus, Swazis and Knopneuzen [Tsonga]' and who all spoke Dutch.[2] Their servile status within Boer society did not prevent these individuals creating their own world and their own opportunities. When Valentyn arrived in the eastern Transvaal in the late 1840s, there were a large number of inboekselings who lived in the town of Ohrigstad or its vicinity who

> ... when their masters slept, came together to dance and sing. Valentyn whose master lived close to Ohrigstad also participated. When all was quiet at his master's place he would take a riding ox from the cattle kraal and would soon be in the middle of the dancing.[3]

Skilled inboekseling musicians were also much in demand to provide the music at Boer weddings and celebrations.

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 653-4. See also S. Trapido, 'The Long Apprenticeship: Captivity in the Transvaal', unpub. seminar paper, Conference on Southern African Labour History, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976.

[2] B.M.B., 1861, p. 253.

[3] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 656-7; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 25.12.1869, 17.1.1870.

The nocturnal amusement at Ohrigstad had predictable consequences for the participants. Amidst the merriment Valentyn met and became enamoured of Lys. Lys's mother, Christina, had been brought from the Cape but had been freed on the death of her master. The couple were married by Lys's master Gert Schoeman who followed the service in his psalm book. It was however common for inboekseling couples who wished to set up house together to be plagued with difficulties. This was particularly true if the individuals concerned served different masters or if only one of the couple had been freed. Some men were forced to purchase their wife's freedom; others, unable to or prevented from following this course, could enter their spouse's master's service in order to assist her to work out her time or simply in order to be able to live with her. It appears that masters were often particularly unwilling to surrender control over women because it offered the opportunity of impelling their husbands into service and gaining control over their children.[1]

Not only did inboekselings not become mere ciphers for Boer culture but despite the traumatic transition which they had undergone, and notwithstanding their subjection to Boer ideology which stressed the aptness of their servile status, there is little doubt that inboekselings resisted and resented their position and sought to modify or escape it. While the various forms these struggles took cannot be detailed here in full, the B.M.S. and Lydenburg records are littered with references to the desertion of inboekselings. The possibility and reality of desertion in fact, played a crucial role in shaping the position of inboekselings within Boer society.

---

[1] U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 296, 658-9.

The assumption that individuals who did not try to escape were content with their lot appears highly dubious; desertion, however, was no easy course to follow. For inboekselings the world beyond that of their masters was by no means a necessarily safe or welcoming place particularly if they had been taken from their society of origin sufficiently early to have little knowledge of that society or incentive to return to it. Hence the age of capture probably played an important part in determining the incidence of desertion. Brutal and harsh treatment also played a part. Nachtigal's diary contains some evidence that on occasion serious violence was done to inboekselings. The consequences of unspecified bad treatment are revealed in the case of the widow Potgieter who was deserted by two of her inboekselings after previously having driven away her hired labour. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that violence played a central part in relationships between inboekselings and their masters.[1]

The case of Mrs. Potgieter suggests another and possibly more important dimension to desertion - that households with limited numbers of inboekselings, or those denied additional supplies of labour, were forced to make relatively heavy demands on the labour that they did have and that it was from households of this kind that desertions were most common. The account of Lys's elder sister Sylvia is suggestive in this respect. William Neethling who brought Lys's family with him from the Cape was a poor Boer and thus had no other labour. As a result, Lys and her younger brother Daniel and her elder sister Sylvia did most of the work, while their mother also acted as maidservant. They had to cut timber, plough, thresh and do other heavy work. Eventually, Sylvia could bear her onerous duties no longer and took the opportunity of deserting while acting as Neethling's oxen leader on a trip to the

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 360 and 920.

Cape. She thus bade farewell to her mother and family. There is also some evidence that periods marked by a high incidence of desertions coincided with times when increased demands were made on inboekseling labour. In the early 1850s, there was a major exodus of inboekselings from the Lydenburg area. Nachtigal was later told that in this period the inboekselings became aware of the fact that slavery was not permitted in nearby Natal, and as a result, many left their masters secretly and went there. While this explanation for the exodus can stand alone, it is striking that this period was one in which the Boers' diminishing ability to coerce labour out of the surrounding African societies probably impelled them to place an increasingly heavy burden of labour on their inboekselings.[1]

Escape was fraught with dangers of which recapture was not the most pressing. The options open to the fugitive were to strike out for the Cape or Natal, to head for the relative anonymity of the larger towns, to seek refuge in an independent African society or to return to their society of origin if this was known or possible. Valentyn was caught up in the Freiheitstaumel (lit: freedom frenzy) in the early 1850s and absconded with his sister Kaatjie. They eventually reached a group of 'Maferi kaffers' who lived near the Vaal River.[2] Valentyn, however, began to regret having run away, missing both Lys and his master. He was reluctant to seek out his father in Zululand because, in his account to Nachtigal, he had become accustomed to the 'good life with his master and did not wish to return to the uncivilized Kaffirs'.[3] He appears to

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 654-5, 659-61.

[2] Ibid., p. 660.

[3] Ibid.

have been held captive by the 'Maferi kaffers', but eventually took the opportunity of a trip by a group of them to the southern Sotho to procure guns, to escape. After further trials and tribulations he encountered a travelling Boer who knew both him and his master and who took him back to Lydenburg. Valentyn's brother Kibit - who deserted some years later - fared even more disastrously, meeting a violent death amongst the Nzunzdza Ndebele.[1]

Valentyn's and Kibit's experiences were probably not entirely typical. There is evidence that refugee inboekselings were willingly harboured within Pedi society. Indeed, the haven that the Pedi area afforded was sufficiently threatening to the control of the neighbouring Boers over their labour force for the Lydenburg Republic commission to Sekwati in 1857 to seek his assistance in securing the return of inboekselings who had deserted their masters. These requests for assistance were repeated on the accession of Sekhukhune in 1861.[2] There is no evidence, however, that either Sekwati or Sekhukhune were prepared, in practice, to grant such help. There were probably a number of reasons for the attitude adopted by the Pedi rulers. One was that the Pedi were incorporating new forms of technology, most importantly fire-arms, into the society. Refugee inboekselings were likely to be acquainted with the maintenance and repair of these items and gun repair at least would have provided them with one means of support. They were also able to provide information about the nature and intentions of the Boers and some may have been able to render service as scribes and interpreters.

---

1 Ibid., pp. 660-68.

2 See ch. 1, part 3, and ch. 4, part 2.

The attitude adopted by the Pedi rulers towards these individuals should also be placed in the wider context of their policy of encouraging settlement in their area of hegemony. These individuals, bereft of established political and kinship networks, could become clients to men of wealth and position within the society. But the fact that they lacked wider networks exposed them to a variety of dangers. A tantalizing glimpse of what could befall them once they settled in the Pedi domain is afforded by the recollections of Andreas. A Tsonga by origin, he escaped from his master and took refuge within the Pedi area in the 1850s. However, his relationship with the people amongst whom he had settled became increasingly strained, and to escape these difficulties he went to Pretoria and took employment with an Englishman. In 1863 he returned to the Pedi domain and lived in the environs of the B.M.S. station at Khalatlolu. While he was there, Sekhukhune summoned him 'because all the slaves who had runaway from the Boers were his children'.[1] Sekhukhune re-named him Noane e Mofzia and he was obliged to render service to the paramount's mother. He recalled later that he had a good life and that he lacked neither food nor drink. On Thaba Mosego he became friendly with four other refugee inboekselings. Finally, however, he incurred Sekhukhune's displeasure through his involvement with the missionaries and the converts at the capital and he left the area with Nachtigal in 1866.

The refugee inboekseling thus ran the risk that deserting a master could mean that he found himself without a defender, or that a servile position within Boer society had been exchanged for close and exacting ties of dependence within African societies. Some, like Valentyn, chose

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, pp. 842-3. See also ch. 5 and ch. 7.

to return to their former masters although not all were as sympathetically received. Windvogel, for example, found that the cost of desertion was a severe whipping from the Veldcornet and an additional year's service. For Windvogel, as for many others, the major incentive to return was the desire to be re-united with wife and family, but encountering such severe treatment he deserted again, this time never to return.[1]

The reluctance of masters to free their inboekselings when they had served their allotted time was probably as important in prompting desertion as any of the factors outlined above. In the Lydenburg area most children acquired were not entered into the Landdros's contract book.[2] Thus, in a situation in which there was no established mechanism for ensuring that inboekselings were freed on maturity, there was also no evidence for most of them showing when or at what age they were acquired. Even those who had been registered were unlikely to gain access to the records or to read them and there is no evidence for the eastern Transvaal that officials intervened on their behalf. It is also likely that the age of children was under-estimated in the contract book, and Nachtigal caustically observed 'some appear to remain young for ever'.[3] In some cases inboekselings were freed on the death of their masters but in many cases freedom was probably granted out of a growing realisation that to withhold it would provoke desertion.

Freedom, of course, meant different things to different people. To some masters it simply meant that the inboekseling should now receive some remuneration for his services. For many it clearly did not include the right to seek alternative employment. In a situation where mature inboekselings were allowed to choose their masters, the poorer

---

[1] S.S. 200, R.3032/75, Nachtigal to State President, 11.2.1875.

[2] T.A. L 19, Order issued by Landdros, 12.12.1860; LL 1, List compiled by Van Niekerk, 20.5.1861; LL 179, Landdros to Veldcornets, 30.6.1866.

[3] S.S. 200, R.3032/75, Nachtigal to State President, 11.2.1875.

members of the community who had limited alternative supplies of labour stood in danger of losing their inboekselings to wealthier members of the community who could offer more attractive conditions of service. On one thing, however, all masters were united, and that was that freed inboekselings had no right to leave the local community in which they had been raised. In the late 1850s, the burghers resident in the Lydenburg area expressed their concern that 'adult children' (a revealing formulation) were settling amongst the neighbouring tribes and thus losing their 'civilisation'.[1] In 1859, the Volksraad of the Republic of Lydenburg prohibited this practice.

In some cases, inboekselings found that liberty - while sweet - was brief. Plaatjie who had been freed on his master's death, was plied with liberal amounts of brandy by his late master's son. In a highly inebriated condition, he agreed to enter into a contract for ten years' service in return for an annual wage of £1. 10. 0. Before he had a chance to sober up and perceive the error of his ways, a contract was written out and registered at the Landdros's office. Even though Plaatjie received only one payment in nine years of service he was not released from his contract. This example also adds to the evidence which suggests that alcohol may have played an important part in the control of inboekselings. Another not uncommon practice was that the children of inboekselings were in turn placed under, or regarded as being under, contract.[2] However, not all masters engaged in skulduggery to retain the services of their inboekselings after they had reached maturity. The wiser, and probably the wealthier, proffered cattle and access to land and wages as an inducement to continued service. Differential ability to benefit from

---

[1] T.A., L 12, Landdros to Uitvoerende Raad, 13.10.1859; L 4, Uitvoerende Raad besluit, 25.10.1859.

[2] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 690; T.A. 200, R.3032/75, Nachtigal to State President, 11.2.1875; B.M.B., 1868, p. 332.

the existence of a trade in children and the probable tendency for desertion to be more common from the households of poor Boers and for freed inboekselings to be drawn into the service of the wealthier members of the community probably also ensured that labourers of this kind were increasingly unequally distributed within Boer society.

The uncertainties of the world beyond that controlled by their masters, along with ties of culture and family which were cemented by access to land, cattle, arms, and a market for their skills and products, ensured that some continued in service within Boer society. While Alfred Aylward's description of 'this contented class, faithful and attached to their masters' is clearly cosmetic in intention, his account of their 'gardens, fruitful orchards and small houses' is probably rather better founded.[1] He also gives an indication of the nature of the relationship which existed between these families and Boer households: 'while the women worked in the household, the husbands had bits of land and locations of their own on the farms and put ... in time as wagon drivers, ploughmen and herders'.[2] Some were able to accumulate substantial resources and to gain and retain considerable independence within the society. By 1865, Valentyn was 'free' and in possession of his own wagon and team of oxen. In the early 1870s he was in charge of a farm in the bushveld owned by an absentee Boer landlord and had placed part of it under cultivation for his own benefit.[3]

There was, nevertheless, a constant movement of these individuals away from Boer society. This probably ensured that the Boers were dependent on a continuing supply merely to maintain existing numbers. For a complex of reasons, however, in the late 1860s the extent of the trade dwindled. The death of Mswati and a relative lull in military

---

1 Aylward, Transvaal, pp. 150-51.

2 Ibid.

3 U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 1, p. 679; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, 15.6.1870.

activity played a part in reducing the supply of captives from the Swazi kingdom. The price of those who were traded from this source also rose sharply and by the early 1870s, only fire-arms were accepted in exchange for captives. Mounting African resistance in the northern Transvaal and the collapse of Schoemansdal in 1867 dislocated the Zoutpansberg trade. At the same time, the Z.A.R. state which had partially recuperated from the divisions and disputes which undermined its authority in the early 1860s made more vigorous attempts to curb open trade in children. Its resolve in the matter was also stiffened by a renewed round of anti-slavery agitation against the Republic which fed on the flagrant examples provided by the Zoutpansberg trade and coincided with a more interventionist phase in British colonial policy in southern Africa.[1] The Boers were thus increasingly forced to meet their labour needs from other sources.

---

[1] Kistner, 'Anti-Slavery Agitation', pp. 223-7, 232-5, 236-9; B.M.B., 1870, pp. 369-70; T.A., LL 2, Merensky to Landdros, 20.7.1866; LL 18, p. 563, Regulations for trade in orphans, 1.5.1867; S.S. 83, Suppl. Stukke 9/66, Steyn to Wodehouse, 4.12.1865; S.S. R.724/72, Barkly to Acting President, Z.A.R., 22.5.1872; S.S. 147, R.1121/72, Merensky to State President, 19.7.1872.

PART THREE

Legislation and the State

Until the latter half of the 1860s, the authority and control of the Z.A.R. over the African population of the Transvaal, in those areas where it had some substance, was extremely devolved. The forms of exaction and administration were shaped as much and probably more by local exigencies and possibilities as they were by state policy, and local officials and notables retained considerable autonomy of central direction. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, however, while the authority and unity of the Z.A.R. remained far from secure, some attempt was made to enforce a more centralised control over the administration of the African population within the state's domain and a welter of laws were enacted designed to raise revenue for the state and provide labour for its burghers. In part this increased intervention was the consequence of the state having weathered initial crises of secession and civil war and in part it was the result of a continuing crisis occasioned by African resistance, the absence of revenue and demands made upon the state by its citizens for a supply of labour.

In 1871, the state suffered a serious reverse when the Keate award denied it control over the diamond fields. The resignation of the President M.W. Pretorius was one of the repercussions of this loss and T.F. Burgers was elected in his stead in 1872. Burgers acceded to office fully aware of the need to modernise the state. He had ambitious plans to overhaul its administrative machinery, to centralise and regularise the collection of revenue, to restore the state's internal and external credit and order to its finances. The opportunities offered by the market created by the diamond fields and more importantly by the exploitation of the gold discoveries in the eastern Transvaal appeared

to Burgers to provide the basis for the economic development of the region and he set about planning to provide the requisite infrastructure and to establish a rail-link to Delagoa Bay.[1]

The Z.A.R. was plagued from its inception by a chronic shortage of revenue. The systematic collection of taxes, fees and dues from citizens and traders was not achieved. Tribute was collected from African societies and in some districts attempts were made to institute a system of African taxation but little of this revenue accrued to the state. Mounting African resistance to these demands and the civil war which rent the newly re-unified Z.A.R. in the early 1860s ensured that even the collection of tax and tribute fell into abeyance. A fairly general practice appears to have developed that those groups who met the labour and rent demands of local office-holders and landlords were spared from further demands.[2]

The fledgling state thus unable to finance military expeditions and the barest essentials of civil administration used land as the basis of a number of financial manipulations. From as early as 1857, mandaaten (treasury or exchequer bills) were issued for services to the state and while not legal tender were secured by government farms. From 1865 onwards, partly in order to recall these mandaaten, a number of issues of paper currency were made, each time being secured by government land, and each time inadequate to meet the state's need for revenue or to redeem the mandaaten. These notes circulated at well below their face value, and many traders refused to accept them at all. In consequence,

---

1 S.P. Engelbrecht, Thomas Francois Burgers: A Biography (Pretoria, 1946), pp. 75-83; F. Lion Cachet, De Worstelstryd Der Transvaalers, (Amsterdam, 1882), pp. 444-5; M.S. Appelgryn, 'Die Presidentskap van T.F. Burgers, 1872-1877', unpub. D.Litt, University of South Africa, 1977, p. 17.

2 T.A., L 19, Landdros to Veldcornets, 8.3.1861 and 12.3.1861; S.A.A.R., Transvaal No. 4, Bylaag 38, R.3148/59, Report by Pretorius, Sept. 1859; Bylaag 27, R.3992/60, Begrootings Wet 1861; Bylaag 1, U.R. 468/60; Bylaag 62, Suppl. Stukke, 36/63, Albasini to Uitvoerende Raad, 10.4.1863; Bylaag 101, R.625/64, Petition Smuts and 17 others, 22.8.1864.

barter remained the dominant form of exchange in the Transvaal.[1]

In 1867 the state was confronted by a major financial crisis. Partly as a result of the upheavals and campaign in the Zoutpansberg district, a budgeted expenditure of £15,883 turned into an actual expenditure of £46,000, while actual revenue was well below the budgeted revenue. Yet more notes were issued. In 1868, the Finance Commission recommended that an issue of £45,000 should be made secured against 1000 farms, that is, approximately 3 million morgen of land. With this issue, the total of farms pledged against paper money reached 1431. Of the 1000 farms securing the 1868 issue, over half were in the Lydenburg and Zoutpansberg districts. In the former, 511 farms totalling 987,400 morgen were set aside. These farms were to be sold periodically at an 'upset' price of £100. These measures both increased the pressure to secure title to land in the eastern Transvaal and may have played some part in the large land-holdings amassed by individuals and companies in the early 1870s in the northern and eastern Transvaal. One of Burger's most pressing priorities was to redeem these notes, and in 1872 therefore, he negotiated a loan of £60,000 from the Cape Commercial Bank secured agains the land and the future revenue of the state.[2]

In the aftermath of the civil war, some attempt was made to regularise African taxation by laws passed in 1864 and 1866 designed to combine the functions of supplying revenue for the state and labour to its citizens. Little attempt was made, however, to turn law into practice and in some areas the collection of taxes appeared more likely to jeopardize than to assist labour supplies. In October of 1866, Veldcornet P. de Villiers of the Orhigstad ward of the Lydenburg

---

1 Trapido, 'South African Republic', pp. 53-6; R.H.D. Arndt, Banking and Currency Development in South Africa, 1652-1927 (Cape Town, 1928), pp. 93-110

2 Ibid.; S.S. Suppl. Stukke 71/71, List of farms, 21.9.1871; Engelbrecht, Burgers, p. 80.

district reported that Africans in his area refused to, or claimed to be unable to pay taxes, and in December of the same year, de Villiers and others petitioned the Uitvoerende Raad to relieve Africans resident in their ward from taxation on the grounds that its imposition would result in an exodus to the heartland of the Pedi polity. Over the Transvaal as a whole, little revenue was collected in 1866, 1867 or 1868. In 1868, the Finance Commission was forced to report that an estimated revenue of £1,500 from African taxation had turned into an actual income of £3. 5. 9.[1]

Part of the state's response to the financial crisis of 1867 and 1868 however was to improve the collection of revenue and particular attention was paid to African taxation. From 1868 onwards, the State Secretary regularly reminded the Landdroses of the various districts of the need to collect these taxes and the Auditor General drew their attention to this aspect of their annual financial reports. The Landdroses in turn either collected taxes themselves or directed the Veldcornets in their districts to do so. The financial returns for 1869 showed a considerable improvement in this respect over previous years. They also showed, however, that the bulk of taxes were collected in the central, southern and western districts of the Republic while the northern and eastern districts lagged far behind despite the fact that they contained the majority of the African population.[2]

Complaints about inadequate supplies of labour were perennial in the Transvaal in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the numbers and

---

1 T.A., LL 2, de Villiers, 31.10.1866; E.V.R. 203/6A, de Villiers to Uitvoerende Raad, 29.12.1866; S.A.A.R., Transvaal No. 7, Volksraad Notule, 12.2.1868.

2 T.A., LL 19, Landdros to Uitvoerende Raad, 23.1.1869; Landdros to Veldcornets 29.1.1869, 3.2.1869, Landdros to Auditor General, 6.5.1869; S.S.V. R.135/71, Taxation returns 1869, 1.2.1871; LL 3, State Secretary to Landdros, 2.2.1871; LL 19, 166/72, Landdros to Veldcornets, n.d. 1872.

stridency of these complaints were not constant and the late 1860s and early 1870s witnessed a peak of discontent amongst the citizens of the Z.A.R. which was partly reflected in a flood of petitions despatched from most areas of the Transvaal. This perceived labour shortage was shaped by a number of factors. The supply of inboekselings dwindled. The most important area of settlement for the growing white population was the highveld which in the main had sparse African settlement and thus little local labour. There was also a markedly unequal distribution of the supplies of labour which existed. Labour was available to those able to secure and enforce title to land on which Africans were settled and those in a position to encourage settlement on land under their control or those able to coerce or enlist the assistance of chiefs and heads of settlements. Those able to secure a fuller complement of labour were also probably more likely to retain their inboekselings. White settlers who lacked the necessary property and authority to secure labour by these means were dependent on relationships of clientage to secure some share of the labour available. They particularly depended upon local office-holders to allocate some labour to them and increasingly looked to the state to intervene to create additional supplies.[1]

One important effect of the development of the diamond fields and the gold fields was that this situation was exacerbated. The diamond fields provided the market for agricultural produce which the Transvaal farmers had previously lacked. Farmers in the south-western Transvaal were particularly benefited and grain, fruit and tobacco were sent directly to the fields from the Lichtenburg, Potchefstroom and Marico

---

[1] Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 197-203; see also, T.A., E.V.R., vols. 211, 213, 218, 219, 220, for examples of these petitions.

districts. Sharply rising prices for oxen and sheep also stimulated pastoral farming. The growing population on the gold fields ensured a constant demand and high prices for grain, and more generally lifted the economy of the eastern Transvaal out of the doldrums.[1]

Transvaal farmers, however, found themselves facing a bitter conundrum. The new markets which provided high prices for their produce also offered high wages and a ready supply of arms and ammunition to African migrant workers. This ensured that, if the supply of hired labour did not actually fall off, it certainly did not grow suffiently to meet the increased demands. In the eastern Transvaal, the demand for grain encouraged the extension of the area under cultivation and the utilization of the lower-lying lands in the northern reaches of the district which were well-suited to wheat production. This created a demand for labour which could not be met owing to the competing attractions of the diamond and gold fields. The growing power of the Ndzundza and Pedi polities and the diminished threat represented by the Swazi kingdom also reduced still further the extent to which local Africans were prepared to render labour service in recognition of the authority of the Z.A.R. or the power of local notables. The problem was made even more complicated by the fact that the need to build roads and secure porters to service the gold fields led the Landdros of Lydenburg to make demands on local officials to provide labour for state service. This labour was poorly and/or rarely paid, and represented an additional and heavy burden on African communities who recognised the authority of the Z.A.R.[2]

---

1 Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 108, 113-37.

2 Naude, 'Boerdery', pp. 197-203; T.A., LL 4, 153/73, Gold Commissioner to Landdros, 23.9.1873, 166/73, State Secretary to Landdros, 3.10.1873; LL 180, de Villiers to Landdros, 7.11.1872; S.S. 204, R.204/76, 25.6.1875; LL 4, de Villiers to Landdros, 24.1.1873; LL 19, Landdros to Veldcornets, 14.2.1870; S.S. 158, R.123/73, Landdros to Uitvoerende Raad, 9.6.1873; E.V.R., 220, Petition, Erasmus and 23 others, 26.4.1873.

The continuing shortage of labour and revenue provoked a rash of proposed and enacted legislation in the early 1870s. Law nine of 1870 which came to be widely known as the kaffer wet anticipated later anti-squatting legislation in provisions to control African settlement on state land and to impose broad limits on the extent of settlement on private land. It also contained a clause which stated that each farmer was entitled to the service of five families and one which lifted previous exemptions of those in service from taxation. Tax was to be levied on huts with the sum of 2s. 6d. per hut expected from those in service of the owners of the land on which they lived. Those in servive with other than their landlord were liable to a tax of 5s. 0d. and those out of service had to pay 10s. 0d.

This law was passed before the full effects of the development of the diamond and gold fields were felt in the Transvaal. In response to their impact and the patent inadequacy of the earlier legislation, new laws were enacted in 1872 and 1873. The previous laws had stipulated that all Africans had to carry a pass. These were issued free of charge by missionaries, chiefs and officials. The new legislation, however, attempted to make the pass not merely an instrument of control but as importantly a source of state revenue and a means of inducing Africans to seek employment on the farms. It was laid down that all adult males had to carry passes which had to be renewed annually for the sum of £1. The holder would be exempt from all other taxes and free passes would be issued to those who could produce a certficate showing that they had been under contract of service to a farmer for not less than six months. A further inducement to obtaining a pass was that only holders of these would be granted the additional pass permitting them to travel to the diamond fields. These laws, however, proved largely unworkable

and in 1874 a commission appointed to examine their effect recommended the even more unrealistic step of raising the price to £5. In 1876, comprehensive new legislation was passed but British annexation intervened before it could be demonstrated whether this law would prove any more effective than its predecessors.[1]

This welter of legislation created considerably more confusion than clarity in the minds of those entrusted with its interpretation and application. The laws were the subject of rumour and extravagant speculation and some local officials acted on the basis of their opinion of the provisions the laws should have contained. The laws were the subject of repeated entreaties for clarification from officials, citizens and missionaries and they also provoked a steady stream of petitions demanding that they should be revised or revoked. Nonetheless, while these laws in part reflected the struggles over land and labour being waged within the Transvaal, some attempt was made to implement them and they thus played a part in shaping their outcome.[2]

With the exception of threats to mission stations, little attempt was made to apply the anti-squatting clauses of law nine of 1870. Local officials were loath to pursue a policy which might undermine part of the basis of their own authority and labour supplies. The taxation clauses of the 1870 law and the pass laws appear to have initially at least been partially enforced. This was in line with existing state policy to enforce the collection of taxes from its subject African population and was also most vigorously enforced in the southern, central and western districts. In response to the promptings

---

[1] T.A., E.V.R. 219, Report of Commission re the pass law, 15.11.1874; S.N. 1, 239/79, Memo. re Laws regarding natives, H.C. Shepstone, October, 1879.

[2] B.M.B., 1870, pp. 369-70; B.M.B., 1871, pp. 403, 413, 416; B.M.B., 1876, p. 259; E.V.R. 218.

of the central government the Landdroses took the initiative in the collection of taxes. The consequences of this in a number of districts however were conflicts between these officials and the Veldcornets. Africans who paid their taxes argued that by doing so they had fulfilled their obligations and should be freed from labour service. In some cases, the recognition of the authority of the Landdros was made the basis of a refusal to comply with the demands of Veldcornets and landowners. The attempts at more centralised direction and control over administration and revenue were seen by local notables and officials as posing a threat to their control and demands were made from these quarters that the role of the Landdros should be reduced. Part of the problem confronting the Z.A.R. in this period was that attempts to make its central authority effective brought it into collision with entrenched local power.[1]

In the main, the attempts of African societies to invoke the authority of the central government against that of local notables failed and the result was that those subject to the authority of the Z.A.R. in the 1870s found that they had to shoulder additional burdens while receiving little relief from their existing ones. In a situation in which the demand for labour increased without the state or its citizens being capable of generating new or alternative supplies, the result appears to have been that existing relationships of exploitation were intensified. Heightened exploitation invoked increased and widespread resistance which took a variety of forms. In some areas - notably the western Transvaal - this period witnessed Africans intensifying their efforts to secure title to the land on which they

---

[1] S.S. 139, Suppl. Stukke,71, Commissie voor Kafferzeken 1771 S, Prinsloo, 103/71 David, 106/71 O. Sachse, 108/71, H.C. Penzhorn. See also the petitions from various districts in this volume.

lived and they used the opportunities provided by the produce and labour markets created by the development of the diamond fields to raise the required capital. Africans were barred by Z.A.R. policy from holding title to the land in their own right and their farms were commonly registered in the names of local missionaries. Some groups petitioned the Volksraad and the Uitvoerende Raad for relief. Other groups and, in some instances entire chiefdoms, responded by moving away from the Z.A.R. domain. At least three chiefs accompanied by their subjects left the Rustenburg district in the early 1870s. This exodus was also particularly marked in the Pretoria district, and Commandant Prinsloo complained to the Kaffer Commissie in 1871 that 'kaffers are constantly trekking away' and a number of those who did, headed north east towards the area of hegemony of the Pedi polity.[1] In 1872, Andries Maubane and his subjects, whose 1870 petition was quoted at length above, resolved to leave the district, and one portion decided to seek refuge in the Pedi domain.

The collapse of Z.A.R. authority in the Zoutpansberg and the unbroken and growing power of the Pedi and Ndzundza polities played an important part in allowing emigration to remain a feasible strategy for groups settled in the central and eastern Transvaal. In 1871, Merensky wrote, in part out of concern for his own mission station,

> It is without question that our laws in relation to the natives are deficient. It is a disturbing symptom that the peaceful black population which hitherto lived amongst us have now embarked on a great trek ... and have resolved to live amongst the hostile tribes which surround us.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., evidence of 91/71 S. Prinsloo; 107/71 L. Ganin; B.M.B., 1872, pp. 67-8. G.H. Relly, 'The transformation of rural relationships in the western Transvaal', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of London, 1978, pp. 5-25.

[2] S.S. 139, Suppl. Stukke 71, Commissie voor Kafferzaken, 82/71. Memo. re the Kaffer question, Merensky, 17.10.1871.

In 1874 Nachtigal wrote that

> ... coloured people are in turmoil and are leaving their previous abodes so that the Boers in the district ... [Lydenburg] have virtually no more kraal dwellers and workers. The bitterness of the whites against the blacks grows with every day that passes.[1]

However, by the 1870s the heartland of the Pedi polity was already experiencing pressure on its productive resources and this and other factors persuaded some groups to settle on its periphery. An equally important response was that groups who had previously lived under a loose dual Pedi and Lydenburg hegemony or who had recognised the sole authority of the Z.A.R. now denied the authority of the Republic. Veldcornets reported that Africans withdrew to the heartland of the Pedi polity when attempts were made to collect taxes or claimed allegiance to or instruction from the Pedi paramount in order to evade payment. In 1872, the Landdros of Lydenburg reported to the Uitvoerende Raad that it was virtually impossible for him to collect taxes in his district as Africans claimed to be subjects of Sekhukhune and to live on his land.[2]

The struggles over land and labour, and the changing nature and effect of state intervention in the late 1860s and early 1870s thus both contributed to the movement of groups to the heartland of the Pedi polity and led to an increasing polarisation of political identification with groups invoking the authority and power of the Pedi polity to resist the demands of the Z.A.R. and its subjects. At the centre of the struggle in the eastern Transvaal in the mid-1870s was Sekhukhune's younger brother, Johannes Dinkwanyane, and his followers, who broke away from Botsabelo mission station in 1873. An account of the nature and

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, p. 184.

[2] T.A. LL 3, de Villiers to Landdros, 19.10.1870; LL 19, 180/70, Landdros to de Villiers, 25.10.1870; LL 19, 92/71, Landdros to State President, 27.3.1871; LL 19, 193/72, Landdros to Uitvoerende Raad, 29.7.1872; LL 20, 67/73, Landdros to Auditor General, 8.4.1873.

role of this group, however, demands an examination of the history of the Christian community which was partly formed from individuals who left the Pedi heartland in the 1860s, settled on mission stations and recognised the authority of the Z.A.R.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FROM REFUGE TO RESISTANCE

MISSIONARIES AND CONVERTS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE Z.A.R.

After their departure from Botsabelo mission station in 1873 and a brief attempt to live within the sphere of authority of the Z.A.R., the community led by Johannes Dinkwanyane settled on the periphery of the Pedi domain. During the following years, this group became increasingly prominent amongst those that rejected the basis of the demands made by officials and challenged the rights claimed by land owners. This community also came to represent an alternative for African Christians to settling or remaining on mission stations and an increasingly serious threat to the control of the missionaries over converts. The demands which were voiced with growing stridency by sections of the white community in this period that the Z.A.R. should intervene militarily to re-establish its authority over the region, focused as much - if not more - on the activities and attitudes of Dinkwanyane as on those of Sekhukhune.[1]

Dinkwanyane has, in comparison to other nineteenth century African leaders in the Transvaal, been the subject of a considerable body of historical comment and scholarship. Although this work contains valuable material it is marred by crude cultural determinism and by attempts to portray Dinkwanyane as an early Pedi nationalist. Van Rooyen, for example, accounts for the secession of Dinkwanyane and his followers from Botabelo in terms of their 'traditional ... spontaneous feeling of loyalty towards their former chief [Sekhukhune]'.[2] He argues that the

---

[1] See ch. 9, part 2, for further discussion on this point.

[2] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 179.

historical dynamic of the community lay in a re-assertion of ethnic identity and he believes Dinkwanyane became the mouthpiece of the 'national aspirations of the natives of the north-eastern Transvaal'.[1] The most recent and comprehensive account of Dinkwanyane's life sees it as a 'model of conflict between two ... cultures', and concludes that although

> Johannes Dinkwanyane ... and George Washington have more differences than similarities, there is one central point of likeness - they both, in their own independent ways, wished to realise the nationalist aspirations of their followers.[2]

There is, however, little trace of explicitly nationalist concepts in the admittedly imperfect record of the ideology of this community and the suggestion that the actions of its leader and members were motivated by ethnic identification and allegiance is also open to question. To reject cultural determinism of this kind is, of course, not to argue that culture and ideology are epiphenomenal or without force. It does, however, lead to a determination to examine their effect and development in the context of changing economic and political relationships. In large part, the following chapter is devoted to the latter task.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 242.

[2] D.W. Van Der Merwe, 'Johannes Dinkwanyane, 1842-1876', South African Historical Journal, 8, November (1976), pp. 15-31, in particular p. 31; see also, B.V. Lombaard, 'Bydraes tot Bronne oor Johannes Dinkwanyane', Historia, X, 1 (1965), pp. 4-16.

PART ONE

Botsabelo: The Place of Refuge

The destruction of the Kopa chiefdom by Swazi warriors in 1864, and the abandonment of the mission stations within the Pedi domain, marked the end of the first phase of missionary enterprise in the Lydenburg district. In the second phase, the concentration of missionary effort was on developing Christian communities settled on mission stations in areas under at least partial Z.A.R. authority. Lydenburg station, near the town of the same name and under the direction of Nachtigal grew slowly. By 1870 there were 97 inhabitants, mainly Pedi, the core of which had left Khalatlolu with Nachtigal. The station was also a focus for the inboekseling population in its area. Nachtigal retained rather more of Sekhukhune's trust than did Merensky. The paramount was concerned to receive warning of the movement of Swazi warriors and to retain at least one of the missionaries as a channel of communication with the officials of the Z.A.R. In order to maintain this connection, Sekhukhune permitted Jonas Podumo and other converts to travel within the Pedi heartland visiting and tending to the needs of the Christians who had failed to follow the missionaries into exile. Sekhukhune did not feel the need to mount another major offensive against Christians within his domain, although he remained concerned at the movement of Pedi to the stations and the fact that Botsabelo might provide the basis of a challenge to his authority.[1]

While Lydenburg station gradually attracted adherents, Botsabelo (the place of refuge) under the guidance of Merensky became the show-place of the B.M.S. in the Transvaal and became a model for missionaries

---

[1] B.M.B., 1868, pp. 248-352; B.M.B., 1869, p. 261; B.M.B., 1870, p. 374.

and administrators. Sir Garnet Wolsey who found few places or people worthy of his praise during his visit to the Transvaal in 1879, became quite extravagant in his admiration for Botsabelo and its founder. He confided in his diary

> ... it is a pattern for all South African mission stations: I wish there were a thousand like it elsewhere in the Transvaal, but then one would require a thousand men like Merensky and they are not to be had easily.[1]

Botsabelo, by the late 1870s must indeed have been an impressive place. It had a population of sixteen hundred 'a fine church, certainly the finest in the Transvaal, stores, dwelling houses, workshops and a huge native village'.[2] To this list could be added the station mill, wagon-building and repair works which catered to the needs of the surrounding Boer and African population. It came for a time to have the largest school in the Transvaal, and in the early 1870s the credit of the mission station was greater than that of the Z.A.R. It must have dwarfed Nazareth (the nearest Boer town) and above the station 'situated on the summit of a high knoll and with a steep ascent to it on all sides' stood Fort Wilhelm, Merensky's answer to Thaba Mosego.

> Walls fifteen feet high and two feet thick, pierced with loop-holes and built of iron stone, enclose a space of seven yards square; there are flank defences and a turret over the entrance, which give a clear view of the surrounding country.[3]

Botsabelo provides a striking if particular example of a missionary domain and of the phenomenon of the missionary landlord which became an important feature of rural society in the Transvaal.[4] In his later

---

[1] A. Preston (ed.), The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley (Cape Town, 1973), p. 147.

[2] E.F. Sandeman, Eight Months in an Ox Wagon (London, 1880), p. 157.

[3] Ibid.; see also, Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 198-215, 217-279.

[4] S. Trapido, 'Landlord and Tenant in a Colonial Economy: The Transvaal 1880-1910', Journal of Southern African Studies, 5, 1 (1978), pp. 26-58, in particular, pp. 38-42.

published account of his career in the Transvaal Merensky gives an extended account of his thinking and goals at the time of the establishment of the station. Having been a missionary within a powerful African polity, he now found that he was in charge of the destinies of a community living together on land belonging to the mission society. It was clear to him that this station should develop into an 'institute'. He defined an institute as a mission station located on B.M.S. property, the form of administration being determined by the fact that the Mission society both claimed rents from the inhabitants and through its missionary representative governed the community through mutually agreed codes of law and discipline. Merensky, with the benefit of hindsight, goes on to recall his awareness at the time of the potential difficulties facing such a community. Firstly, the missionary would, on occasion, have to enforce the laws of the state and represent the interests of the landowners, the missionary society, against the wishes and perceived interests of the station tenants. Secondly, the missionary would have to tread a perilous path between the need to secure a return for the landlord and the possibility of endangering his effectiveness in developing a Christian community.[1] While much of the latter thinking suggests prediction after the event, many of the conflicts which emerged in Botsabelo in the ten years after its founding need to be viewed in the light of these factors. The starkest example of their effect prior to 1880 is to be found in the departure of Johannes Dinkwanyane and 335 followers from the station in 1873.

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 205-7.

From the foregoing the importance which Merensky attached to the role of missionary as landlord is clear and the question of the ownership of land remained central to the development of the community. The basis for the station was the purchase by Merensky of the farm 'Boshoek' from a land agent for £75 in 1865. The farm, while no more than ten miles from Nazareth (later Middelburg) was surrounded by land which though owned by Boers remained unoccupied by them. As the B.M.S. was not permitted corporate rights within the Z.A.R., this and subsequent land purchases were registered in the name of Merensky. When 'Boshoek' was surveyed, 700 hectares were added as a gift from President Pretorius. Shortly thereafter, Merensky succeeded in purchasing the neighbouring 'Van Koller's Plaas', some 3,800 hectares for £225, which provided areas of fertile land and wood and winter grazing. Subsequently, two further farms totalling some 5261 hectares were purchased and by the early 1870s, prior to the rise in land values in the eastern Transvaal, Merensky had accumulated a total of 11,395 hectares (28,450 acres) for £538. Under his successor, Botsabelo reached over 40,000 acres.[1]

Despite the vast extent of these lands much of the soil was unsuited to maize and sorghum production and there was little winter grazing. Some tenants in consequence cultivated the Middelburg town lands. Merensky decided against selling or granting title to the land to the inhabitants; as only usufructuary rights to the land were granted, he delegated the responsibility for apportioning the land to the community's leaders. In the main, he also ensured that the tenants did not contribute directly to the land purchases. This practice was breached however in 1875, when the tenants were directly involved in the purchase of a £350 farm to be used for winter grazing.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 202, 264-6.

[2] Ibid., pp. 203, 207, 228; B.M.B., 1876, p. 259.

The initial population of the station was made up of the 115 men, women and children who had left Ga Ratau and its environs with Merensky, and 120 Kopa who decided to follow Ramapodu and seek security under missionary protection after the destruction of Boleu's stronghold by the Swazi and under continuing threat of attack from the Ndzuzndza Ndebele under Mabhogo. Of the two groups the Pedi initially contained the higher proportion of Christians but the Kopa had had long experience of being required to meet the demands of Boer, Pedi and Ndebele for tribute and labour. These numbers were swelled by the arrival of more converts from the area to the north after the closure of the remaining missionary stations by Sekhukhune in 1866. There continued to be a steady movement of individuals to the station from both amongst the Boers and from the domains of effectively independent African societies. While Christian conviction played a role in this movement, Botsabelo also indeed represented a place of refuge. Merensky generally refused to accept inboekselings onto the station, although some had in fact accompanied the converts from Ga Ratau and others settled on the outskirts. Merensky's reasons for this appear to have been his wish to retain the cultural homogeneity of the population and his desire to avoid offending surrounding Boer society or weakening his own control over the station. By February of 1866, the population had grown to 460; by 1869 it was 1020 and by 1872 it was 1108.[1]

While Sewushane, Mantladi and others played a central role as assistants to the missionaries in the specifically religious life of the community, Merensky made use of a highly modified form of chiefship for the temporal administration of Botsabelo. Johannes Dinkwanyane and Ramapodu who were both of royal descent, were installed as principal

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 204, 207, 216, 247, 248; B.M.B., 1870, p. 356, B.M.B., 1873, pp. 353-5.

agents of control and representation. This was not of course simply on the whim of Merensky. Ramapodu brought his followers to the station, and Dinkwanyane's rank would no doubt have been recognized in any event by the converts from the heartland of the Pedi polity. These leaders were delegated the power to allocate land to their subjects and to settle disputes among them. They were not, however, allowed to retain fines. These went into the coffers of the mission society. Merensky, aside from his position of religious leadership, remained responsible for settling disputes between tenants and outsiders, presided over particularly intractable or serious cases, and of course, retained ultimate authority over the distribution of land. Merensky observed in this highly modified form of traditional authority a mechanism of control and discipline. He was, however, to discover that it could be double-edged.[1] But it is also understandable that Merensky, in whose person the lines of temporal and spiritual authority were merged, should have brought chiefship to the mind of others. To Wolseley he was 'a great chief more than a mere teacher of the gospel' and a 'paramount chief' at that.[2]

The B.M.S. followed the Moravians in using church discipline as an instrument of social control on mission stations and this fusion of spiritual and temporal power made the missionary landlord a figure of formidable authority. The lives of the tenants on Botsabelo were regulated by Platzordnung (station regulations) which Merensky viewed as a combination of 'God's Law' and Pedi practice. The missionary interpretation of 'God's Law' included very particular notions of property and the moral dangers of idleness and improper dress. Amongst

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 207, 221, 248-9, 272-4.

[2] Preston (ed.) Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 145.

those aspects of Pedi practice considered incompatible with it were initiation, bridewealth payments, rain-making, witchcraft, divination and, of course, polygyny. While the missionaries and their African helpers maintained church discipline, the chiefs also played an important part in the administration of the Platzordnung. Recourse was only made to the missionaries in grave or intractable cases and/or those requiring the interpretation of God's Law. The penalties to which tenants who breached these laws were subject ranged through fines and flogging to banishment from the community.[1] Merensky gave a visitor the following impression of the operation of discipline on the station: a new arrival was

> ... made clearly to understand the laws of the community, that idleness will not be allowed and will be visited by expulsion, that theft will be punished by lashes and expulsion too; drunkenness, the first offence a flogging and the next a still more severe flogging and expulsion into the bargain.[2]

Cultural breaches could also lead to eventual expulsion from the station and Merensky prided himself on having stamped out polygyny and bridewealth amongst the tenants.[3]

In the early years of the station's existence most of its inhabitants were forced to scatter among the surrounding farmers to work for grain. Others traded their beads, metal goods and war axes for food. Women also made pots which they exchanged for sorghum and maize. While the community survived in this fashion, lands were cleared, irrigation channels

---

1 Wright, German Missions, p.13; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 260-61, 272-4, 298, 411-2.

2 Sandeman, Eight Months, pp. 158-9.

3 Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 257-8.

were dug and orchards of fruit trees were planted. In 1868 the gardens and fields of the tenants produced 3000 bushels of grain and the harvest of 1869 allowed Merensky to rejoice that 'Botsabelo which a few years previously was stricken by hunger is this year the corn store for the entire region'.[1]

In 1870, Botsabelo, despite drought and swarms of locusts produced 3460 bushels of grain over and above the legumes, gourds and melons grown and consumed. The tenants also accumulated stock through the sale of their labour and the exchange of their produce. By 1872 the station residents had 700 head of cattle and an equivalent number of sheep and goats. It is probable that the quantity of stock owned by tenants increased relatively rapidly in the 1870s. Until the development of the eastern Transvaal goldfields after 1872 there was a very limited local market for grain. From 1873, however, there was a virtually insatiable demand for grain in the region which the tenants of Botsabelo played an important part in meeting.[2]

The tenants had other important sources of subsistance and surplus. Dinkwanyane and his followers were given permission by President Pretorius to purchase arms and ammunition and they were well placed to exploit the teeming herds of game that moved from the highveld into the middleveld and lowveld in the winter. This abundance of game also enabled hunters to profit from the high prices for skin and feathers which prevailed in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Some members of the community travelled further afield in search of greater reward. Makuetle, for example, appears to have used Botsabelo as a base from which to continue and

---

[1] B.M.B., 1868, p. 338; B.M.B., 1869, p. 357; B.M.B., 1870, p. 371.

[2] B.M.B., 1873, p. 355; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 279.

probably even to extend his activities as a hunter. In 1870, Makuetle, his brother Silas, and a number of companions set off to the north to hunt elephants, and Makuetle appears to have travelled regularly deep into the northern elephant-hunting regions. Other individuals used Botsabelo as a base for trading expeditions: one tenant, for example, travelled regularly to Zululand and occasionally to Swaziland trading ostrich feathers. The wagon-building and other workshops at Botsabelo also employed and trained carpenters, wheelwrights and smiths, who could then and later find wider employment for their skills repairing the wagons, ploughs and guns of their fellow tenants and Boer and African neighbours. The wagons which numbers of tenants owned by the 1870s also allowed them to participate in transport riding.[1]

Tenants also sought work in the Transvaal and, increasingly after the opening of the diamond fields, further afield. Men from Botsabelo had their first experience of the diggings as a result of an attempt on the part of the B.M.S. to share in the diamond windfall. An expedition of twenty-five men was despatched from Botsabelo with a wagon, provisions and equipment provided by the society, to mission-owned lands near Kimberley to search for diamonds. The plan was that as the society had provided the capital and the men had provided the labour the anticipated profits would be shared. These profits, unfortunately for all, were small. After five months of diligent labour and the discovery of no more than eight small diamonds, the venture was abandoned.[2]

Despite this disappointment, men continued to make their way to the fields although it was wages rather than diamonds which were now the principal goal. The missionaries, like the neighbouring African chiefs,

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 220-21, 263; B.M.B., 1871, p. 415; B.M.B. 1873, pp. 352-6; Preston (ed.), Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 145.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 291-2.

did not relinquish control over, or supervision of their subjects who were participating in migrant labour. Each group of men going from Botsabelo to the diamond fields was placed under the supervision of a Christian leader. Men went to the fields for four to eight months, after which time they were recalled to Botsabelo lest the decadence of the diggings caused them to waver from their Christian faith.[1] Merensky took additional measures to prevent the undermining of the Christian conviction of migrants by the diamond fields:

> At that time ... [only] our sound and steady men went to the mines, those who we could be reasonably sure could withstand drink and other vices during the course of their lives there.[2]

It is not surprising that such disciplined and controlled workers were much in demand at the fields. Those, however, considered unfit by the missionaries to travel to the fields were debarred from earning the highest wages available and from participating in the accumulation of stock which they made possible.

Aside from the dominance of the protestant ethic on Botsabelo and the consequent importance attached by the missionaries to industry as an index of Christian faith and a condition of residence, the fact that many of the tenants had been stripped of their grain, stock and fire-arms prior to their arrival provided a powerful incentive to additional thrift and effort. Merensky was concerned to ensure that part of the habit of industry was the sale of produce or labour. This was partly achieved by 'Obliging man, woman and child to wear clothing: the wearing of clothing has a very good effect, as it makes the people work to buy the clothes'.[3] The missionaries also made direct demands on the

---

[1] B.M.B., 1872, p. 197; B.M.B., 1873, pp. 352-3.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 292.

[3] Preston (ed.) Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 145.

produce and labour of the tenants on station lands. Rent in kind was a tithe of 10 per cent of the sorghum, maize and later wheat crop of the residents. In 1868 the tenants wrote to the B.M.S. Director Wangemann to inform him of how they had 'given grain and how ... they had heard that God loves those that give joyfully. They had given one hundred and fifteen muids ... (two hundred and thirty bushels) of grain'.[1]

In 1870, a bad year, those under the authority of Dinkwanyane alone contributed over 260 bushels of grain and the total tithe was 346 bushels, worth roughly £100. Over and above the fines imposed on the tenants by the chiefs and missionaries, residents had to find 10 shillings to pay for Christian marriage and 2s. 6d. to pay for a child's baptism. In the four founding years of Botsabelo, Merensky calculated that the tenants had contributed in the region of £1200 to mission funds.[2] Aside from these sources of revenue, Botsabelo also had

> ... a large and flourishing store where the natives supply themselves with all they require and from which the Boers and others in the neighbourhood also obtain what they want. By this means and the tithes of the natives' produce, the station is a rich one.[3]

The Platzordnung also stipulated that tenants should provide unpaid labour for the erection of church and school buildings. The demands which these activities made on the labour time of the tenants were by no means slight. In the period up to 1873, three churches were built of increasingly impressive proportions. The last was amongst the largest in the Transvaal. Long hours of labour were required for the quarrying and transportation of stone, and the forming and baking of clay bricks.

---

1 B.M.B., 1868, p. 346.

2 B.M.B., 1870, pp. 199, 371; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 258.

3 Preston (ed.) Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 145.

In 1871 work was begun on a school building which, when it was completed, was reputed to be the largest in the Z.A.R. Once again stone had to be provided - the building required 40,000 bricks and the missionaries were bemused that the tenants could find labour irksome which was so obviously in their interests. In addition to these obligations, the tenants were subject to other demands on their labour, which Merensky eventually regularised into the form of one day of unpaid labour per month. On these days, the work ranged from construction to road building and bridge repair and probably also included the cultivation of the missionaries' lands. Tenants were obliged to provide their own food and implements. School children also found that labour formed an important form of their curriculum.[1]

Merensky was unequivocal in his determination that his tenants should recognise their status as subjects of the Z.A.R. and that they should fulfil the obligations which this position entailed. He adopted this stance despite the fact that the authority of the Z.A.R. over the area in which Botsabelo was situated was at best tenuous, and the Ndzundza Ndebele under Mabhogo and his successors remained firmly of the opinion that they had prior claim to demand tribute and loyalty from the tenants and, at the very least, hunting rights over the station lands. These claims were given short shrift by Merensky. His position was that

> Although we lived on the frontier we had bought our land from the Boers, had come to an arrangement with their government and wished to be their subjects. I made it very clear to my people that as Christians we could not serve two masters, both Mapoch and the Boers. This would only be possible through total deceit.[2]

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 231-5, 241-2, 259-60, 274-7.

[2] Ibid., pp. 211-2; see also pp. 207, 246.

Merensky thus denied the residents on Botsabelo the options of recognizing the authority of neither or both strategies which were variously adopted by neighbouring Africans and Boers. The extent to which Merensky was influenced by the fact that his ultimate authority was based on a property right which in turn ultimately depended on the authority of the Z.A.R., also emerges from this quotation.

Recognizing the authority of the Z.A.R. entailed meeting demands for tax and labour. In 1868, for example, 60 bushels of the Botsabelo grain crop were handed over to Z.A.R. officials. The tenants of the station were, in the late 1860s and early 1870s virtually unique amongst tenants on private land and notional subjects of the Z.A.R. in paying tax at all. They also suffered from demands for labour made by the authorities at Nazareth and elsewhere. Men from Botsabelo were obliged to supply labour to maintain postal services, to transport state property and prisoners and to supply warders for the town gaol. This labour was infrequently and poorly paid and particularly in the cases of trips through the lowveld to Delagoa Bay, could involve considerable personal risk. As with tax, tenants on the mission lands were obliged by their missionary landlord to meet labour obligations which other subjects of the Z.A.R. shirked or actively resisted. It also seems probable that Merensky retained the good favour of at least a section of the Boer community through his ability to supply and direct labour.[1]

The labour legislation of the 1870s appeared particularly ominous for the future of the mission stations and the new exactions pressed very heavily on tenants on mission lands. One interpretation of the laws was that no landlord could retain more than five families on his land which in theory threatened the continued existence of stations like Botsabelo. This theoretical danger seemed about to be realised on

---

[1] B.M.B., 1868, p. 338; T.A., LL 3, Merensky to Jansen, 11.4.1871; LM 1, Merensky to Landdros, 11.6.1873; Merensky to Landdros, 5.9.1873; State Secretary to Landdros, 1.5.1874.

8 November 1871 when a Boer commando led by a Veldcornet who claimed authority from General S.J.P. Kruger arrived at Wallmansthal mission station intent on dividing up the tenants among the local farmers. The missionary, Knothe, managed to secure a stay of execution and despite sporadic threats, the integrity of this and other mission stations was maintained. At Botsabelo, Merensky followed the advice of the local Landdros and placed all the tenants under contract to him.[1]

---

[1] B.M.B., 1870, pp. 369-70; B.M.B., 1871, pp. 403, 413, 416; B.M.B., 1876, p. 259.

PART TWO

Mafolofolo

Botsabelo, having weathered the immediate threat represented by the 1870 law, was, in 1873, confronted by a new crisis. From early that year, Johannes Dinkwanyane, supported by Timotheus Maredi, Salomon Mootlane and David Mpyane, pressed Merensky for permission to move off the station. A complex of reasons lay behind both this development and Dinkwanyane's support amongst the tenantry, but any understanding of or explanation for this turn of events needs to be located in the structure of exaction and control on Botsabelo and the changing role of the Z.A.R.

By the early 1870s, the growing population on Botsabelo and the poor quality of much of the land had led to some pressure on resources of arable land and some tenants were dependent on access to Nazareth (Middelburg) town lands for their crops. Their access to this land was threatened both by their lack of title and by their inability to fence against Boer cattle which trampled their crops. The increasing numbers of stock held by tenants also made the need to gain access to winter grazing still more pressing. Up to 1874, access to grazing could be secured but only at the expense of long and wearisome hours of labour service to Boers who owned land in the bushveld. After 1874, the increased demands made on winter grazing by highveld Boers resulted in Botsabelo tenants being virtually excluded from access to it.[1] The effects of these pressures were exacerbated by the growing awareness among the tenantry of the limited extent of their own rights to station land. This awareness, in turn, informed questioning of the levels of

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 296-7; B.M.B., 1875, pp. 169-71; T.A., S.S., 172, R.921/74, Grützner to Meintjies, 1.6.1874; R.922/74, Meintjies to State Secretary, 2.7.1874, and Petition signed by Coetzee and 17 others, 30.6.1874; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 106 and 109.

control and surplus appropriation maintained on the station. In 1873, Dinkwanyane expressed some of this sense of frustration to Nachtigal

> Do we have no land [place]? ... Have not we continually worked for Merensky and so served him? ... We helped to build the mill and were not paid and the school and churches. Further we have worked the land for him in the form of the tithe.[1]

From the early 1870s and probably before, men from Botsabelo encountered Christians at the diamond fields and elsewhere who came from mission stations in the Cape and Natal where discipline was less stringent and demands for rent were less oppressive. This comparative perspective both reinforced the questioning of missionary demands and equipped the tenants with arguments demonstrating that Botsabelo did not represent the only or ideal form of Christian living. Tenants used the example of other stations to deny the necessity of unpaid labour and the level of rent. Merensky met these arguments with the stipulation that all who avoided labour rent would have to pay an additional cash rent of 12 shillings per year.[2] But the rejection of missionary authority went still further, as Dinkwanyane asked Nachtigal 'Where is it written down that the congregation must live on the land of their spiritual leader?'[3]

It seems unlikely that, as Merensky would have us believe, this comparative insight provided the substance of the discontent. It did, however, provide a language of argument to the tenantry. Probably as important as the effect which the development of the diamond and gold field had at the ideological level, was the demand for produce and labour which they stimulated. Unpaid labour, the grain tithe, and controls

---

1 U.A., Tagebuch, A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 110; see also, B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 19.2.1875.

2 B.M.B., 1875, p. 136; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 276-7, 296-7.

3 U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 109.

over movement probably became still more irksome with the development of high prices for produce and high wages for labour and when surrounding African and Boer producers were able to compete free of some of the constraints under which the mission tenants laboured.

The recognition of the authority of the Z.A.R. enforced by the missionaries on their tenants exacerbated these stresses. The extent to which the state directly impinged upon the lives of the tenants was increased by the labour and tax laws passed and partially implemented in the early 1870s. While the collection of tax remained far from efficient and confusion reigned amongst officials as to how to apply the legislation, in 1874 (after the departure of Dinkwanyane) the Botsabelo tenants paid over £150 in taxes to the state. Being subject to this level of taxation must have been particularly vexing to a community which had been almost alone in meeting any of the state's demands for tax. Finally, the legislation and the circumstances which gave rise to it encouraged demands by officials and burghers of the Z.A.R. for labour from mission station inhabitants at precisely the time when alternative markets for the tenants' labour developed.[1]

It was against this background of heightened dispute and discontent that Dinkwanyane and Merensky came into conflict. The substance of the dispute between the two men was clearly the extent of chiefly authority permitted on the station. However, it was in part conducted specifically over Dinkwanyane's insistence that the women of the community should no longer be allowed to grow their hair but should shave it according to 'traditional' practice. Merensky denied Dinkwanyane's right to enforce his opinion on his followers. This argument raised wider, if partly

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, pp. 145-8; B.M.B., 1876, p. 259.

unstated questions about the extent to which the missionaries' demands for a radical restructuring of the social organisation of the tenantry were justified. By the early 1870's residents on Botsabelo were invoking the example of mission stations on which custom, particularly in relation to the payment of bridewealth, was nowhere near as comprehensively denied. It is possible that the accumulation of stock made possible in this period encouraged the demand that bridewealth should be permitted, and it is also possible that it was essential to secure women from neighbouring communities to meet the demand for wives which existed amongst tenants.[1]

The terms of the debate and subsequent additions to the Platzordnung also suggest that the concern for custom reflected an increasing unease that life on the station was breaking down the control exercised by men over women and parents over children. Equally, chiefship on Botsabelo, while drawing on traditional legitimacy was a pale imitation of even subordinate chiefship within the neighbouring African political systems. While Dinkwanyane retained a degree of control over the allocation of land and dispute settlement, much of the tribute in grain and labour and the income in fines which would have accrued to him as a traditional chief bypassed him and ended up in the coffers of the B.M.S. or the Z.A.R. This latter aspect of the dispute was implicitly recognised by the later attempts of the missionaries to ensure that 10 per cent of the revenue accruing from the taxation of tenants was retained by the chiefs. There also appears to have been increasing competition and conflict between Dinkwanyane and those who achieved religious leadership within the community, principally Sewushane and Kathedi. The latter also acted as Merensky's personal aides.[2]

---

1 B.M.B., 1875, pp. 135-7; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 295-9.

2 Ibid., Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 411-3; T.A., S.S. 172 R.921/74, Grützner to Meintjies, 1.6.1874; T.A., A.419/8, Translation, Regulations of Botsabelo, n.d.

In late 1873, Dinkwanyane and 335 followers with their possessions including, and partially loaded onto, two wagons left Botsabelo. The dominant explanation for this exodus in the existing literature — that it was the consequence of a re-assertion of primordial ethnic feeling and political loyalty - seems more than a little misplaced. The major prop for this argument appears to be that it was primarily those who had fallen under the authority of Dinkwanyane and not those who had been subject to Ramapodu who departed. It is thus suggested that the division between those who withdrew and those who remained coincided with a division between 'Pedi' and 'Kopa'. Yet part of the explanation for this differential participation in the withdrawal may well lie in the effect of the experiences of the Kopa at the hands of the Lydenburgers, the Pedi paramountcy, the Ndzundza Ndebele and the Swazi prior to their settling on Botsabelo. The attacks, threats and demands which the Kopa suffered in this period probably deeply imprinted upon their thinking the dangers of being without a powerful defender. Added to this was their experience of the way the missionaries had invoked the authority of the Z.A.R. against them when some members of the community displayed a desire to move off the station, probably to more fertile land, shortly after having settled there. By the time of the departure of Dinkwanyane, Ramapodu and his followers appear to have been reconciled to the B.M.S. as their best possible defender, and worth the cost entailed in exaction and control. Many had become full participants in the Christian community, and the exodus of 1873 probably eased some of the pressure on resources which had been developing on the station and ensured that the missionaries lent a rather more sympathetic ear to the complaints of their tenants. Ramapodu also now emerged as the most powerful political leader amongst the tenantry.[1]

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 176-7; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 210-11. 248-9.

Beyond this, however, is the point that the impelling ethnicity - if it existed at all - was as much the creation of Botsabelo as it was of prior Pedi cultural and political tradition. The sphere and content of Dinkwanyane's authority was in large part determined by the development and administration of the mission station. The group that left with him, while primarily composed of individuals from the heartland of the Pedi polity was, in terms of any concept of ethnic homogeneity, diverse (as, of course, was the Pedi polity itself). A leading supporter of Dinkwanyane was the same Andreas e Mofzia who fled inboekseling status within Boer society for clientship within Pedi society. Also important amongst Dinkwanyane's supporters were a group of Koni who had moved from the Elandspruit area, settled briefly within the core area of the Pedi domain and then moved to Botsabelo. While the core of the followers of Dinkwanyane may have been drawn initially from Thaba Mosego and its environs, the degree of common ethnicity between those who departed was certainly no greater than that which bound most of the tenants who lived on Botsabelo. Almost all fell within a broad north Sotho/Pedi cultural tradition and almost all (including the Kopa) came from societies which had been at some point subject to the Maroteng paramountcy. The community on the station was in fact in many ways representative of the process of the creation and recreation of communities which was a continuing feature of the aftermath of the difaqane, and Boer settlement in the Transvaal. The arguments as they stand, collapse the vital distinction between cultural heritage and political affiliation, which much of the nineteenth century history of the eastern Transvaal clearly demonstrates.[1]

The aim of Dinkwanyane was not simply to escape Botsabelo but, as importantly, to enable himself and his followers to purchase land in their own right. Land ownership offered the possibility of divesting Christianity

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, pp. 138 and 153.

of the institutional framework deemed appropriate for it by Merensky. While the desire to purchase land showed the intention of staying within or at least on the margins of the area of authority of the Z.A.R., it was probably hoped that land-ownership would ensure the moderation of state demands for labour and tax. Both the desire of this group to purchase land and their expectations of the consequences of its acquisition may have been shaped by their awareness of the experience and practice of kholwa (Christian African) communities in Natal, and of communities in the western Transvaal. The desire to stay within the sphere of control of the Z.A.R. was shaped by the desire of these tenants to remain practising Christians. They also wished to settle close to the labour and produce markets of Lydenburg and the gold fields.[1]

The favoured area for settlement was Elandspruit, the former home of the Koni, to the east of Lydenburg. The land was fertile, game remained abundant and the terrain was rugged and so relatively easy to defend. The owner of the land, D.J.G. Coetzee, anticipating handsome returns, readily agreed to its settlement on condition that the community initially paid for their winter grazing, killed a limited amount of game and, in the coming years, hired or bought the farm. The Landdros of Lydenburg, A. Jansen, took a rather different view; his attitude being shaped by the confusion surrounding the right or otherwise of Africans to purchase land, and the possibility that in the rugged terrain of Elandspruit, Dinkwanyane would be inclined to evade his obligations to the state. It also seems likely that the counsels of the missionaries played an important role in shaping his attitude. Merensky wrote to him informing him of Dinkwanyane's intentions and through much of 1873, the strategy he adopted was influenced by the belief that it would be in the

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, p. 176; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 229; Etherington, Preachers and Peasants, pp. 122-3; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal 2, p. 116.

best interests of all if the authorities at Middelburg and Lydenburg dissuaded Dinkwanyane from leaving Botsabelo.[1]

The mounting frustration of the members of this group at the refusal of the state to permit them to buy this land was forcefully expressed to Nachtigal: 'You whites have taken our land from us and now we are not allowed to be landowners. But tell us by what right (law) can this be denied to us?'[2]

The future of Dinkwanyane and his followers by the latter half of 1873 seemed bleak. Dinkwanyane gave the following account of his predicament and options in an appeal to Nachtigal and Merensky.

> I cannot and will not remain on Botsabelo, I am not permitted to go to Elandspruit and there is no government land available close to here. We are desperate. If you do not take pity upon us and if you do not help us, we have no other option but to go to Sek. [Sekhukhune]. But we cannot go there as we would have to live without the word of God.[3]

The appeal was in part that Nachtigal should allow them to settle on one of his farms or that Merensky should register a farm for them in his name. Neither missionary was prepared to extend them this assistance. By August of 1873, however, Merensky began to moderate his position in the belief that if Dinkwanyane were forced to remain on the station he would do more damage to missionary authority than if he departed. Merensky wrote to President Burgers suggesting that while Dinkwanyane should not be permitted to settle on private land, he should be allowed to settle on government land. Finally after discussing the problem with Nachtigal, Burgers, in the absence of suitable government land, gave permission for Dinkwanyane to settle on the farm

---

1 B.M.B., 1875, pp. 138-9; T.A., LL 4, Merensky to Landdros, 26.5.1873; S.S., 159, R.1107/73, Joubert to State Secretary, 22.7.1873; this document suggests that the owner of the farm was M. Schoeman; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 107-8.

2 U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 106.

3 Ibid., p. 114.

'Vrishgewaagd' belonging to 'Heer Schultz', eight miles west of Lydenburg on condition that 'he behaved himself'. On 4 October 1873, the first party of 230 people left Botsabelo for their new home.[1]

Merensky's eventual, seemingly philosophical, acceptance of the exodus was shaped by his conviction that the 'people will soon realise that they would not have it as good anywhere else as on our stations'.[2] In a letter to Nachtigal in September of 1873 Merensky expressed his opinion of the departure and future of Dinkwanyane in a German proverb. He wrote, 'When a donkey achieves good health it goes and dances on the ice and breaks a leg'.[3] Merensky, insecure in his own powers of prediction, set out to ensure that the condition of the ice was treacherous. On top of his various attempts to ensure that this group was denied access to the land they desired, once permission for their departure had been given Merensky felt it was his duty to inform the Landdros of Middelburg that Dinkwanyane and his followers intended leaving with their guns. This official thereupon demanded a tax of ten shillings per gun and threatened to use force to ensure payment. Merensky's parting act boded ill for future relations between the missionaries and their former tenants.[4]

The sojourn of this group at 'Vrishgewaagd' was short-lived. They had in the course of 1873 been forced to meet the various and increased state demands for tax, including purchasing the new £1 pass. On top of this they were forced to pay ten shillings per gun. Having arrived at their new home they found themselves pressed almost immediately by new demands. The government post had to be transported to Delagoa Bay and

---

1 Ibid., pp. 112, 114-5; T.A., LM 1, Burgers to Merensky, 8.9.1873.

2 U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 116.

3 Ibid.

4 Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 299.

the Landdros of Lydenburg ordered Dinkwanyane to send men to act as porters. Dinkwanyane, newly departed from Botsabelo, felt unable to order his followers to undertake the certainly hazardous and possibly lethal trip to the coast in the summer months. As a punishment for this recalcitrance, the Landdros confiscated three guns from the community. This action was more than the community would tolerate and they abandoned the farm for a spot further north at the junction of the Waterval and Speckboom Rivers which became known as Mafolofolo.[1]

While relations between this group and the officials of the Z.A.R. thawed slightly in 1874, they never again formally recognised the authority of that state. Increasingly, Dinkwanyane and his followers proclaimed themselves to be subjects of Sekhukhune. This overt statement of allegiance to the Pedi polity served a number of purposes. The group, having been denied the right to purchase land, or gain access to the land of their choice, now invoked the claims of the Maroteng paramountcy to ultimate authority over the land to deny the rights of the Z.A.R. to control or dispose of the land. This also enabled them to deny the demands for tax and labour which officials of the Z.A.R. claimed from those within the sphere of authority of the state. Dinkwanyane and his supporters could also now invoke the possibility of the potential military strength of the Pedi polity against those who wished to enforce claims to their labour, land or produce.[2]

These claims to being the subjects of the Pedi polity were not spurious. It appears fairly clear that Dinkwanyane recognised the

---

1 B.M.B., 1875, p. 143; T.A., LL 2, Jansen to Uitvoerende Raad, 26.11.1873; LL 20, Landdros, 14.1.1874; S.S. 169 R.444/74, Breytenbach to Burgers, 10.3.1874.

2 B.M.B., 1875, p. 143.

ultimate authority of Sekhukhune and that the latter accepted his wayward brother and followers as his subjects. This relationship is, however, discussed at length below. Having failed to preserve his effective independence as a nominal subject of the Z.A.R., Dinkwanyane set out with much the same ambition to survive with his followers on the periphery of the Pedi domain now invoking the authority of that polity against the claims of the Z.A.R. This was not the third option he had outlined of taking refuge within the Pedi domain, however, but a fourth which was designed to evade precisely that alternative.

Despite their rejection of the missionary as landlord and of the authority and demands of the Z.A.R., the continuing commitment of this group to Christianity never seems to have been in doubt. Even the missionaries, ready to detect and denounce deviation, conceded that

> ... the word of God and Christian discipline and morals rules [the community]. Open sins like drunkenness and debauchery were punished, nobody took a second wife and the people did not become involved in witchcraft or initiation ceremonies. A service was held every Sunday, Johannes often preached himself ... hours for prayer were set aside and there were other Christian meetings. A teacher tended to the children, school was held each day and the children were assembled for a special service on Sundays. Dying children or catechists were baptized but otherwise the authority of the church [B.M.S.] was not violated, nobody performed Holy Communion.[1]

It seems probable, however, that bridewealth payments were permitted and the missionaries also accused Dinkwanyane of increasingly behaving in the fashion of a traditional chief. Presumably the substance of this accusation was that he assumed powers and enforced rights that had fallen within the missionaries' sphere of authority on Botsabelo. Dinkwanyane, in fact, was prepared to risk an open rupture with Sekhukhune

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 301.

by refusing to allow his daughter to participate in a female initiation ceremony convened by the paramount.[1]

Despite the fact that Christianity continued to play a central role in the lives of the members of this community, Dinkwanyane's repeated requests for a missionary were refused. Merensky had originally encouraged the belief that if stringent conditions were met, a request for a missionary to tend to the religious life of this group would be sympathetically received. These conditions included the requirements that the community should reside on hired or purchased land and should be in a position to provide a substantial portion of the living of the missionary. Merensky's colleagues were, however, of a different persuasion. Nachtigal and Knothe were insistent that only the utmost firmness would prevent further secessions and would persuade Dinkwanyane and his followers to return to Botsabelo. In 1873, the Transvaal synod of the B.M.S. placed the community under strict discipline, in effect excluding them from participation in the formal religious life of the mission. After the removal of Dinkwanyane to Mafolofolo the response of the B.M.S. to requests for a missionary was that a community in open rebellion against the state could expect no religious recognition and assistance. The fundamental condition laid down for any formal re-intergration into the church was that this community should recognise the authority and meet the demands of the Z.A.R.[2]

Relations between Dinkwanyane and the missionaries, distinctly tense by 1874, were virtually severed by the end of 1875. In 1874,

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, p. 144; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 4.6.1874.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 298; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 93, 106-8, 109-10; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Nachtigal to Wangemann, 13.5.1873; Tagebuch Lydenburg, 19.2.1875, 20.2.1875, 10.6.1875; B.M.B., 1875, pp. 145-6.

Merensky took long leave in Germany and Nachtigal was delegated the task of keeping limited contact with Mafolofolo. With Nachtigal's hostility to the community and their awareness of his role in ensuring their religious isolation, the relationship fairly rapidly degenerated into one of open hostility. Conflicts with the missionaries at Botsabelo over the ownership of stock and stores of grain did little to improve matters, although sporadic attempts at reconciliation did occur. In the end, however, it was not the unfounded fears of the missionaries that Mafolofolo would act as a magnet for their converts which fatally prejudiced any possibility of a resolution of the conflicts. Mafolofolo offered the possibility of a Christian life without the attendant heavy demands for tithe, labour and tax. While the subjects of Dinkwanyane and of the Pedi polity were not spared demands on their labour or their produce, these demands, in the main, were considerably lower than those that had to be met by those recognising the authority of the Z.A.R. and the claims of missionary or other landlords.[1]

As the relationship deteriorated, the missionary records suggest that members of the community at Mafolofolo began to enunciate a profound criticism of the role of the missionaries. They argued that they were

> ... enemies [of the converts] for they teach you that you must be subordinate to the Boers; and although they [the Boers] cannot enforce their laws, the missionaries assist the Boers to place you under their yoke.[2]

During 1874 and 1875 there was a steady trickle of families from Botsabelo to join Dinkwanyane, and an exodus from Lydenburg mission station. By the end of 1875, the latter had been deserted by all but

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, pp. 145-6, 149, 180-81.

[2] B.M.B., 1875, p. 149.

its inboekseling adherents. Mafolofolo also attracted Christians who had declined to leave the Pedi domain to settle on the mission stations. The alternative focus for the Christian community which Mafolofolo came to represent appeared to the missionaries - and to Nachtigal in particular - to constitute a profound threat to the B.M.S. Just as the Pedi polity had emerged as an alternative to the Z.A.R. and the Swazi kingdom for the Africans of the north eastern Transvaal, so Mafolofolo, in part drawing on the prestige and power of the Maroteng paramountcy, appeared to be in a position to mount a challenge to the authority of the Berlin Mission. Indeed, by 1875 Nachtigal had reached the conclusion that 'it will also be best for the mission if a foot is placed on the necks of the blacks'.[1]

During 1875 and early 1876, Dinkwanyane's rejection of the legitimacy and authority of the Z.A.R. widened in scope. The settlement gradually took on the appearance of a Felsenburg (rock fortress) and one that appeared formidable even by the standards of Thaba Mosego and Fort Wilhelm. Built beside the sheer Speckboom River gorge, the entire settlement was surrounded by a high stone wall which followed and elaborated on the natural rock outcrops. Within this outer wall was a further fortress and the caves and crevasses of the enclosed rock formation provided the final lines of defence. At the centre of the settlement was a church large enough to house the entire population.[2] The mountain slopes which surrounded the fortified village were covered by terraced gardens, and while the immediate area of settlement may not have been especially fertile, the alluvial soils of the Waterval River valley were amongst the richest in the eastern Transvaal. Dinkwanyane's

---

[1] B.M.B., 1875, p. 184; see also, B.M.B., 1876, pp. 302-5.

[2] B.M.B., 1876, p. 305; Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 309.

son Micha later recalled how his 'father dug furrows there and led water onto the corn lands from the Waterval River' and Nachtigal records that Dinkwanyane bought a plough.[1] Aylward commented:

> I have seen many very pretty and highly creditable bits of cultivation in Kafirland, especially in the beautiful valley of the Speckboom, where, after passing Johannes' stronghold, the river amongst lovely scenery, flows through a rich and fertile valley to the plain.[2]

The documentary record is, however, silent on the extent to which the community was able to realise its stated ambition of taking advantage of the growing labour and produce markets in the region. While the surrounding area was sparsely settled by white farmers the land was legally owned by a variety of seasonally and permanently absentee landlords. To the latter categories of owner, the land provided winter grazing, wood, game and possibly limited supplies of labour. All these resources became increasingly scarce and valuable in the 1870s. The mineral discoveries in the region also resulted in rising land prices and increased land speculation.[3]

Thus at precisely the moment that landowners took a renewed interest in their property and were increasingly dependent on access to the resources available in the bushveld, Dinkwanyane and his followers challenged their rights in the area. They hunted game and cut trees on the neighbouring farms. No doubt with a sense of irony of the reversal of roles, they prohibited Boers from carrying guns or grazing their cattle in the environs of Mafolofolo, and transgressors found their cattle and their arms confiscated. Nachtigal's hostility to Dinkwanyane's

---

1 U.G. 32-18, Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee, Evidence of Micha Duikwana [sic.] p. 25, 15.10.1917.

2 Aylward, Transvaal, p. 148.

3 B.M.B., 1875, p. 144, 168; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 264-6.

settlement was heightened by the actions of his followers in driving this missionary's cattle from his winter grazing farm 'Winterhoek' on the Speckboom River on the grounds that he had not asked or received the permission of the Pedi paramount to pasture his stock there. Dinkwanyane confronted objections to this behaviour with the assertion that the land fell under the sway of Sekhukhune and not the Z.A.R. The neighbouring farmers' dislike of the Mafolofolo was further fuelled by the fact that Tsonga and other groups who had lived as labour tenants on their land left and joined the community.[1]

In October of 1875, the acting Landdros of Lydenburg visited the settlement to order Dinkwanyane to count the inhabitants in preparation for the payment of tax within four weeks. He was not permitted to see Dinkwanyane, and the 40 armed men who barred his path told him that they would pay no heed to his orders

> ... the reason being that they lived on land belonging to Sekoekoenie and could not see how our government had any right to demand taxes from them, and when it was necessary that their people or men should be counted, then they would join Sekoekoeni and let him do the counting.[2]

In the following year - 1876,- the relationship between this community and local officials, missionaries, farmers and landlords deteriorated still further. The demand that the power of the Pedi polity should be broken, which led to the outbreak of war in 1876, was in fact, principally directed against the Mafolofolo settlement. In April 1876, with war looming, Dinkwanyane despatched a letter to the Landdros of Lydenburg which was forwarded through Nachtigal and which gives some sense of his view of events. It also gives a powerful and moving expression to many of the themes developed in this and preceding chapters:

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 187, R 807/75, Nachtigal to Landdros, 7.4.1875, R. 1373/75, Nachtigal to State President, 28.6.1875; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 26.5.1875; Transvaal Argus and Potchefstroom Gazette, 14.4.1876.

[2] S.S. 194, R. 2139/75, Schulze to State Secretary, 1.10.1875.

To the office, to all the people ... I will address you Boers, you men who know God; do you think there is a God who will punish lying, theft and deceit? I ask you now for the truth, I pray for the truth because I also speak my whole truth. I say: the land belongs to us, this is my truth, and even if you become angry I will nonetheless stand by it. See that other people ... blacks ... have settled around here, but they are not so clever as to sell the land because they are ignorant, but you were all too clever ... Your cleverness has turned to theft. When I say your cleverness has turned to theft, I say it in relation to the land, because you came to this country, you knew God's word but ate everything up ... and said nothing to anybody, only flogged [people]. Your theft has now come into the open. Other men came here who were not of your kind who taught the people about this ... And I state and I mean; those who have bought land let them take their money back. [Let] these words [be read] before all the people so that they can hear the same. I am Johannes the younger son of Sekwati.[1]

---

[1] S.S. 207, R.810/76, Dinkwanyane to Landdros, 9.4.1876. The letter was translated by Nachtigal and is in his handwriting.

SECTION FOUR

WAR

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE 1876 WAR

In July of 1876 President Burgers led the largest army thitherto assembled by the Z.A.R. into the field against the Pedi polity. It failed, however, to break Pedi resistance and by early August the President and his Krygsraad had, in effect, been deserted by their army. This military debacle had dire consequences for the authority of the Z.A.R. and provided welcome additional ammunition to those committed to securing the annexation of the Transvaal.

The question remains to be satisfactorily answered as to why Burgers felt impelled to embark on such a hazardous military venture at a time when the Z.A.R. was clearly under threat of British intervention and at a crucial moment for his attempts to secure the capital to embark on constructing a railway to Delagoa Bay. No convincing account yet exists of the pattern of conflicts in the eastern Transvaal which provided part of the backdrop to the war, or of the role in these events of the Pedi paramountcy. While this chapter makes some attempt to address the first question, a full-scale explanation demands research beyond the scope of this thesis. The focus is, therefore, on the developments within the eastern Transvaal.

The lacunae in the existing literature are not merely the consequence of the absence of relevant research or discussion. The importance of the failure of the Z.A.R. to defeat the Pedi, to the case argued by the annexationist lobby, has ensured that historians concerned with the period have paid attention to both the causes and the course of the 1876 war. However, a common strand runs through most of the existing accounts, which has tended to obscure rather than illuminate the variety of processes of conflict and change which found partial expression in the events of the mid-1870s. An aggressive posture adopted by the Pedi paramountcy and reflected in the actions of subordinate chiefs is

invoked in explanation of the outbreak of the war.

The explanations offered for the attitude adopted by the paramountcy vary. Some writers suggest that the paramount suffered from an overweening ambition. According to Smith, Sekhukhune had begun to think in terms of a 'grand empire stretching from the Zoutpansberg to the Vaal'.[1] Uys argues that 'A study of the causes of the war, both remote and direct, leads to the conclusion that neither Burgers personally nor his government was responsible for Sekhukhune's hostile attitude'.[2] In his view, this hostility was the consequence of the supply of guns from the diamond fields, incitement on the part of the Lt. Governor of Griqualand-West, R. Southey and his agents, and the influence of the Langilabelele war. Engelbrecht also places heavy emphasis on external influences suggesting - with a feel for mystery, if with almost no basis in the existing evidence - that 'the Sekhukhune trouble had been gradually planned and instigated by external powers' opposed to Burgers. He also points to the supply of guns from Kimberley and the activities of local traders and arms smugglers as contributory factors.[3] Historians principally concerned with the 1876 war have produced variants of the same broad view. Otto argues that Sekhukhune's territorial aggression lay at the root of the conflict. Van Rooyen, who provides the most comprehensive account of the background to the war, maintains that the outbreak of war was shaped by the expansionist policy pursued by the paramountcy: a policy fuelled by land shortage in the heartland of the Pedi domain and the personal ambition of Sekhukhune.[4]

---

1 K.W. Smith, 'The Fall of the Bapedi of the North-Eastern Transvaal', Journal of African History, X, 2(1969), p. 240.

2 C.J. Uys, In the Era of Shepstone (Lovedale 1933), p.191. See also, pp.192-8.

3 Engelbrecht, Burgers, pp. 137, 139-49.

4 J.C. Otto, 'Die Sekoekoeni Oorlog Tydens die Regering van President Burgers' unpub. M.A. thesis, University of South Africa, 1934, pp. 45-8. See also J.C. Otto, 'Oorsake en Gebeurtenisse wat Indirek en Regstreeks Aanleiding Gegee Het Tot di Veldtog Teen Sekoekoene', Historiese Studies, 7, 4(1946); Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 226-45.

De Kiewiet, however, offers an explanation which differs substantively from those cited above. He suggests that the war was in part the consequence of the growing land crisis in the Transvaal which was reflected in increased pressure on African lands in the various border areas. He also incorrectly maintains that Burgers could not fail to notice that Pedi land lay across the projected line of rail and comments 'Hence the war that commenced against him [Sekhukhune] was not altogether punitive, it was really a war for the ownership of the land'.[1] While he thus points to a vital dimension to the conflicts, his reliance on Colonial Office documentation prevents him from detailing the nature of the land crisis, the form taken by the struggles over land, and the way in which conflict over land meshed with struggles over labour, tax and tribute. Probably the main weakness of de Kiewiet's account is that it is one-dimensional and mono-causal.[2]

Hence, while de Kiewiet differs from the mainstream of writers on the reasons for the war, he shares with them a failure to explore the complex interaction of factors which resulted in the mobilisation of the Z.A.R. army. These cannot be subsumed under notions of Pedi expansionism or a crisis in land. The narrow conception of historical causality which informs most accounts ensures that they focus on the sequence of events which preceded the declaration of war. No rigorous attempt has been made to situate these events in the context of a changing regional and local political economy. Because incidents are not located in processes of struggle and change, or examined against the backdrop of changing relationships of power and property, their full significance is often lost

---

1 C.W. de Kiewiet, The Imperial Factor in South Africa (Cambridge, 1937) p. 100.

2 For a fuller discussion of the weaknesses of mono-causal history see A. Atmore and S. Marks, 'The Imperial Factor in South Africa: Towards a Reassessment', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, III, 1 (1974), p. 106.

or misunderstood while reductionist explanations flourish. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate in particular that the nature of Pedi expansion has been caricatured in existing accounts, and that the role of the paramountcy - and of Sekhukhune - has been persistently misunderstood.

At the outset it is worth recalling the context in which the war took place. By the early 1870s the Pedi polity, strengthened by the growth and influx of population, and the accumulation of fire-arms, had emerged as a major alternative focus of power and authority to the Z.A.R. and the Swazi kingdom in the northern and eastern Transvaal. The military defeats inflicted upon the Swazi by the Pedi and others in the late 1860s and early 1870s revealed the extent to which the regional balance of power had shifted. The reverses suffered by the Swazi also further undermined the authority of the Z.A.R., which had already been rendered fragile by its failure to retain or regain control of the Zoutpansberg in the late 1860s in the face of Venda and other resistance.

Within the heartland of the Pedi polity there was, however, mounting pressure on resources, and this - in combination with the reduction of the Swazi military threat - allowed greater play to centrifugal tendencies. The paramountcy had not established its authority uniformly over all subordinate groups, and struggles over the extent and content of Maroteng power continued into the 1870s. Also, Sekhukhune, while firmly entrenched as paramount had nonetheless to continue to keep a wary eye on the growing aspiration of potential heirs to his position as well as the activities of his thwarted rivals for high office, in particular, Mampuru.

The areas which fell under Z.A.R. hegemony witnessed intensified struggles over land and labour in the 1870s, shaped in part by the repercussions of the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand-West and alluvial gold in the eastern Transvaal. The inflow of capital fuelled land speculation within and beyond the borders of the Z.A.R. Demand for land was also stimulated by the expanded market for agricultural and pastoral products. These developments also intensified the growing demand for land in the eastern Transvaal and attempts to gain control of, and rights to, land there.[1]

Struggles over labour also sharpened. While the new mining centres stimulated agricultural production, they also added substantially to the demand for African migrant labourers. The relatively high wages and short periods of labour involved reduced still further the attractiveness of farm labour to Pedi and other Transvaal Africans. Farmers, and particularly poorer farmers with limited amounts of labour, were thus forced to intensify existing relationships of exploitation to attempt to meet their labour needs. This development gave additional incentive to groups of Africans settled within the area of control of the Z.A.R. to move or to reject the legitimacy of the state. These struggles, in turn, were exacerbated rather than eased by the attempts of the state to regularise the administration of its African subjects and to raise revenue and direct labour.

From the early 1870s those areas on the periphery of the domains of the Z.A.R. and the Pedi polity which had previously been allowed to remain under a loose dual hegemony, became the object and site of mounting dispute. These areas were primarily the northern bushveld and

---

[1] For a further account of the impact of the diamond fields, see ch. 9, Part 1.

lowveld reaches of the Lydenburg district. Their importance grew because of the discovery of gold and the consequent rise in the value of surrounding land. They also encompassed high quality arable land and resources of winter grazing, wood and labour. The value of these areas and the resources they provided both to the subjects of the Pedi polity and those of the Z.A.R. ensured that neither would easily or willingly concede authority over them. Settlement in these zones grew rapidly in the early 1870s encouraged by the richness of the resources they offered, the pressures and conflicts within the core areas of Maroteng and Z.A.R. control, and the relative freedom from political control and demands for tribute, tax and labour.

Thus it seems evident that well before the declaration of war in the eastern Transvaal in 1876, not only was the stage set for conflict but many of the principle and minor players had arrived, knew their lines and awaited their cues. What remained to be revealed was the final shape and outcome of the drama.

PART ONE

Pedi Expansion: the Paramountcy and Subordinate Chiefdoms

In the changed and changing context in the 1870s, the issues of land and labour forcefully resurfaced in negotiations between the Pedi paramountcy and Z.A.R. officials.

The absence of agreement over the content and validity of the various land grants secured by the Z.A.R., and the Maroteng claim to have retained ultimate rights to the land allowed ample scope for dispute. The 1857 treaty entered into by Sekwati and the representatives of the Republic of Lydenburg was ambiguous in its phrasing, and it is impossible to establish to what extent the written clauses mirrored the verbal negotiation and agreement. Sekhukhune had not participated in the 1857 negotiations and although substantial similarities exist between that agreement and the undertakings given by Sekhukhune to the Z.A.R. after his accession in 1861, the notable exception is the absence of any mention of land or boundaries in the latter. Sekhukhune and his subordinates consistently denied that any land had been ceded or granted to the Z.A.R. and they argued that if such transactions had been made, then cattle should have been given to the paramountcy in payment. The paramount told the Landdros of Lydenburg's messengers in 1875 that 'no agreement exists about the line. Where are the cattle that would have been given in exchange [for the land]?'[1]

By 1872, not only did the Maroteng leaders deny the claims of Z.A.R. officials to the Pedi heartland, and suggestions that the Steelpoort River constituted the southern boundary of their hegemony, but they also

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 192 R.1695/75, Statement by Sekhukhune, 3.6.1876.

laid claim to a vast expanse of land. Sekhukhune told Landdros Jansen that

> ...the whole Lydenburg district as far as the Commatie River [sic], further [the land] to the west to the other side of Pretoria was all his territory and that he would continue to make claims upon it.[1]

The basis of this claim was presumably the extent of the area of Maroteng hegemony during the reign of Thulare. In part it was made in response to the situation which developed in the late 1860s and early 1870s of a quickening pace of registration and inspection of land within the heartland and on the periphery of the Pedi domain. By the early 1870s, the paramountcy had at least some idea of what was afoot. In 1873, Alexander Merensky informed the Uitvoerende Raad that Sekhukhune had used the opportunity of a visit from a Cape-based trader and labour recruiter, Edwards, to complain that 'a portion of his land had, without his knowledge and against his will been inspected by a commission as farms for the burghers of the land [Z.A.R.]'.[2]

Merensky further believed that Sekhukhune had sent messengers bearing this complaint to the Lt. Governor of Griqualand-West, Robert Southey. No record remains of the complaint being delivered but Southey does appear to have been made aware of the manner in which farms that fell within or on the margins of the Pedi domain were claimed and disposed of.[3] However, while the increasingly militant attitude adopted by the paramountcy in the early 1870s was partly a reaction to this phenomenon, it was also shaped by the growing pressure on land within the heartland of the Pedi polity and the shifts in the regional balance of power. However, it was not in reality the entire Lydenburg district which was in contention, but principally its richly-endowed northern reaches.

---

[1] T.A., LL 19, 193/72 and S.S., R.1087/72, Report of Landdros, 29.7.1872.

[2] T.A., S.N. 5, Merensky to Uitvoerende Raad, 24.11.1873.

[3] C.A., G.L.W. 182, Southey to Barkly, 16.10.1873.

While the issue of who held ultimate authority over the land steadily gained in importance, threats to the security of life and property of parties of Pedi migrants also provided a recurring source of conflict. Although the early prohibitions on Africans living within the Transvaal crossing the Vaal or acquiring guns and horses had proved unenforcible, sporadic attacks continued to be made on migrants by citizens and subjects of the Z.A.R. These were prompted rather more by the likelihood of rich spoils than by concern for the enforcement of the letter of the law. The possibilities for conflict were compounded by the labour and tax legislation enacted after 1870. In 1872 the State Secretary addressed a circular to local officials suggesting that vigilante bands should be organised to stop Africans travelling without passes and to impose fines or periods of forced labour on them. While tactics of this kind had some chance of success in the central and south-western Transvaal, in the eastern Transvaal they were liable to have disastrous consequences. The Landdros of Lydenburg replied to the circular with the warning that the probably outcome of such a strategy in his district would be war with the Pedi polity. The caution displayed by officials in frontier districts did not, however, prevent some subjects of the Z.A.R. from falling prey to the temptation to seize the cash and commodities carried by returning migrants. Some novel strategies were also evolved to press migrants into service on white farms, the most common of which was to seize their guns and demand a period of labour against their return. A number of other forms of violence, fraud and deception were practiced on migrants, all of which in the eastern Transvaal resulted in a stream of protest and complaint to paramount and subordinate

chiefs within the Pedi polity.[1] Sekhukhune, in some instances, pursued the complaints of his subjects with considerable vigour.

One important example of this occurred in 1872 and, while missionary fears that it would result in war were probably exaggerated, the incident does provide a clear indication of the enhanced strength of the paramount's bargaining power and of his willingness to employ it in defence of migrants. In 1871, one David van der Merwe, while on a trip to Pietermaritzburg, encountered a group of ten Pedi who asked him to buy them guns in return for a commission. Having initially agreed to this arrangement and having received payment, van der Merwe then reneged on his commitment and handed the guns over to the Landdros of Lydenburg. Sekhukhune's protests, and missionaries' warnings of the seriousness of the situation, ensured that the guns were finally returned to the migrants concerned and the Uitvoerende Raad both approved this decision and found that van der Merwe stood in breach of the law and should be prosecuted.[2]

While during this period problems over land and the freedom of movement of migrants feature prominently in the exchanges between the paramountcy and the Z.A.R., their effect on popular sentiment within the Pedi polity, although vitally important, is more difficult to gauge or demonstrate. It seems reasonable to assume though that the migrants' experience of having to run the gauntlet of exaction and attack, as well as the pressures on land both within the heartland of the Pedi polity and on its perimeters, ensured a groundswell of popular discontent which played a part in shaping the attitude adopted by the paramount.

---

[1] T.A. LL 4, 180/72, State Secretary to Landdros, 24.9.1872; LL 19, 231/72, Landdros to State Secretary, 28.9.1872; LL 4, State Secretary to Landdros, 16.3.1872; S.S. 154, R.264/73, Joubert to State President, 14.2.1873; A.371, 13, Nachtigal to Landdros, 9.11.1875.

[2] T.A., LL 3, 155/71, Merensky to Landdros, 29.12.1871; LL 4, 64/72, State Secretary to Landdros, 9.4.1872; LL 4, Nachtigal to Landdros, 12.3.1872; LL 19, 85/72, Landdros to de Villiers, 12.3.1872; LL 4, 114/72, State Secretary to Landdros, 26.6.1872; U.A. Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 26-7, 21.3.1872.

A third recurring source of conflict in the eastern Transvaal in this period was the increasing extent to which groups settled in areas which had previously fallen under a loose dual hegemony rejected the authority of the Z.A.R., refusing to comply with demands for tax, rent and labour made by officials and landowners, and claiming exclusive allegiance to the Pedi paramountcy. As has been pointed out, this development must be understood partly in terms of the level of exaction imposed by officials and burghers. A declaration of allegiance to the Pedi polity was, in some cases at least, primarily a statement of resistance to the authority of the Z.A.R. While the Pedi polity represented an alternative focus of power to these groups, it also provided those confronted with their resistance with an explanation for their changed attitude. This explanation allowed officials and burghers to evade the necessity to reform relations of exaction and control. The blame for conflict could be laid at the door of a malevolent and external political force, the Pedi paramountcy. The eastern Transvaal in the 1870s produced its own variant of the agitator theory of history which has been drawn on so heavily down the years to account for conflict in Southern Africa. In this case, the prime agitator was Sekhukhune who was held responsible for orchestrating resistance.[1]

Sekhukhune was equally unlikely to reject entirely an explanation of events which entrenched an enlarged definition of his own sphere of authority. In 1872, A.F. Jensen, the Landdros of Lydenburg, visited

---

[1] T.A., LL 19, 193/72, Report of Landdros, 29.7.1872; S.S., 173, R.1080/74, Landdros Lydenburg to State Secretary, 4.8.1874; R.1125/74, de Villiers to Landdros Lydenburg, 10.8.1874; R.1128/74, Landdros Lydenburg to State Secretary, 11.8.1874.

Sekhukhune and told him:

> ... that it had been reported to him that all the people paid tribute to him and regarded him as their ruler. He did not deny it and roundly stated that they were his people.[1]

While Sekhukhune was more than willing to derive some advantage from the changing political dispensation for his own position and that of the Maroteng chiefdom, it seems unlikely that the primary motor for the changing patterns of allegiance and identification in the eastern Transvaal can be found in his ambitions. Rather, as in the case of controls over the incomes of migrants, the paramountcy was both reluctant to disabuse outsiders of inflated notions about the extent of its authority, and even attempted to trade on these misconceptions to bolster its own position.

However, it conformed to the dominant mode of explanation and to the interests both of groups settled in contested zones and of officials, farmers and diggers to cede a dominant role in shaping the course of events to the Pedi paramount. The former could thus shelter behind Maroteng authority and the latter were spared from looking for alternative explanations of conflict within their relationships with their subjects, tenants and labourers. Indeed, elements in the perception of the Pedi paramount which developed in the 1870s are reminiscent of the wider phenomenon of the creation of 'scapegoats' in periods of heightened 'social anxiety' and/or 'moral panic'. These scapegoats

---

[1] T.A. LL 19, 193/72, Report of Landdros, 29.7.1872.

> ... into which all the disturbing experiences are condensed ... have attributed to them the role of causing the various elements of disorganisation and dislocation which have produced the "social anxiety" in the first place.[1]

In existing accounts, the interests and aims of the paramountcy have been equated with, and interpreted through the statements and actions of groups on the periphery of the polity. There has, however, been a conspicuous absence of analysis of the nature of the relationship of the Maroteng with these communities. Although information is sparse, it is possible to provide a rather fuller picture than has been available hitherto of the links between the paramountcy and two chiefdoms which played a key role in the events which preceded the war, and whose histories provide illustration of the different strands which have conventionally been subsumed under and obscured by notions of an expansionist paramountcy.

In the late 1850s, Msuthfo had abandoned the Lydenburg Republic and settled in the heartland of the Pedi polity, forming a close relationship with Sekhukhune. In 1873, he crossed the Steelpoort yet again and settled, probably temporarily, on its southern side. This move was advanced as a vital piece of evidence of the expansionist and aggressive intent of Sekhukhune. Such an interpretation, however, does not square with the evidence which suggests that in the early 1870s, Msuthfo, in a number of spheres, was acting increasingly independently of the paramountcy and had even toyed with the idea of abandoning the

---

[1] S. Hall et al., Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State and Law and Order (London, 1978), p.157. This and other accounts of 'moral panics', see especially S. Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics: the Creation of the Mods and Rockers (London, 1972); T. Keegan, 'Black Peril, Lapsed Whites and Moral Panic', unpub. seminar paper, University of London, C.I.A.S., Jan. 1980, and for a somewhat different perspective, C. van Onselen, 'The Witches of Suburbia: Domestic Servants on the Witwatersrand', I.C.S. Seminar paper, University of London, March 1978, are suggestive for aspects of the perceptions and explanations of events in the atmosphere of heightened conflict in the eastern Transvaal in the early 1870s. See also below for further discussion of rumour and the role of key middlemen. As Hall points out, 'scapegoats do not "just happen", they are produced from specific conditions, by specific agencies' (ref. as above).

area of Maroteng hegemony entirely. Indeed, in the early 1870s, a rift appears to have developed between Sekhukhune and Msuthfo. But this did not develop into an open breach: Sekhukhune continued to require and call upon Msuthfo's military services, and the latter continued to depend to some extent on Sekhukhune's authority and power to facilitate his own ambitions. It is thus likely that the 1873 move and the incidents of cattle raiding and attacks on groups settled nominally under Z.A.R. authority in the years that followed represented an attempt by Msuthfo to enlarge his own area of regional hegemony. It is notable that the consistent policy of the paramountcy in relation to these incidents was to enforce the return of all stock raided and to deny specific responsibility for the acts of violence.[1]

While Sekhukhune's intentions have to some extent been interpreted through Msuthfo's actions, both by contemporary observers and by historians, the tendency to equate the aims of subordinate chiefdoms with those of the paramountcy has been even more marked in relation to the activities of the community led by Johannes Dinkwanyane. The explanation which accounts for the departure of this group from Botsabelo by positing that they were in the grip of re-awakened Pedi ethnic feeling hardly surprisingly goes on to present their subsequent actions as a consequence of their subordination to Sekhukhune. Johannes Dinkwanyane is thus portrayed as the agent of his elder brother's inflated ambitions, and his actions are reduced to an expression of the paramountcy's expansionist strategy. Dinkwanyane and his followers, however, were intent on securing as much freedom as possible from exaction and control,

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 99, 27.3.1872; T.A., S.S. 187, R.807/75, Nachtigal to Landdros, 7.3.1875; S.S. 189, R. 1379/75, Schutte to Landdros, 23.6.1875; S.S. 208, R.997, McLachlan to State Secretary, 28.4.1876; R.999/76, Scoble to State Secretary, 1.5.1876; R.1008/76, de Villiers to Landdros, 29.4.1876; R. 1087/76, de Villiers to State Secretary, 8.5.1876, de Villiers to State Secretary, 1.6.1876.

and their attachment to the Maroteng cause was vitally shaped by this ambition. On a number of important issues Dinkwanyane resisted the instructions of Sekhukhune. Most importantly, he refused to settle in the Pedi heartland and insisted on remaining on the periphery. The view of Dinkwanyane as the mere pawn of Sekhukhune thus appears more than a little wide of the mark.[1]

The evidence in fact points to the contrary conclusion that Dinkwanyane was considerably more militant in his rejections of Z.A.R. authority and in pressing the claims of the paramountcy than was Sekhukhune. Sekhukhune, while unwilling to deny so forceful an exponent of his claims to an enlarged formal definition of his authority, remained both uneasy at the methods employed by his younger brother and unwilling in the final instance to commit himself wholly in his younger brother's support. A crucial, if crude distinction was that while Sekhukhune laid claim to a wider hegemony over both land and people, Dinkwanyane sought to put these claims into effect and invoked the authority of the paramountcy against those who attempted to curb him.

Probably the most illuminating insight into the nature of the community at Mafolofolo and the chiefdom was supplied by Nkopodi, Sekhukhune's eldest son who, after quarreling with his father, fled to Botsabelo in 1875. He claimed that his father had no desire to provoke war but that he was

> ... incited ... by Johannes' people ... He [Nkopodi] had himself often heard Johannes say to Secoecoene that he should not listen to anything the people [whites] said but should continue to claim all the land to the Kommatie because the white people oppressed all those

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 240-41; T.A., S.S. 176, R.1524/74, Landdros to State Secretary, 12.10.1874; S.S. 208, R.1009/76, Merensky to Burgers, 2.5.1876; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 25.2.1876, 23.10.1876, 24.10.1876.

> who were obedient to them but left alone ... [those who flouted their authority] ... To the question of whether or not Secoecoeni would come to Johannes' aid if the people attacked him Nkopodi said that his father would not do so as he would get the people that remained [as his subjects].[1]

While Sekhukhune endorsed Dinkwanyane's claim to the land he consistently denied ordering him to harass the local farmers and claimed to have told him to co-exist with his white neighbours. In 1876, as the threat of war loomed larger, Merensky wrote to President Burgers telling him of his opinion that while Sekhukhune might render some assistance to Dinkwanyane in the event of an attack being launched against Mafolofolo his support would be limited as he wished Dinkwanyane to settle in the Pedi heartland. Merensky's prediction proved relatively accurate for when Dinkwanyane was threatened with a commando, Sekhukhune despatched a regiment to assist him but later withdrew it and left Dinkwanyane to face a combined Boer and Swazi force unaided.[2]

It seems clear, therefore, that the conventional picture of an expansionist paramountcy is misleading on two main counts: first because it fails to take into account the wider processes of conflict and change at work in the eastern Transvaal, and secondly, because the interpretations of Sekhukhune's ambitions and intentions suffer from the failure to differentiate between the strategy pursued by the paramountcy and that adopted by subordinate chiefdoms. If divested of the latter overlay, a somewhat different picture emerges of the policy pursued by the Maroteng in the years before the 1876 war. The changed balance of power in the region, and struggles over tax, land and labour both persuaded groups on the periphery of the polity to invoke the authority of the Pedi paramountcy

---

1 T.A., A.371, 13/3, Nachtigal to State President, 22.8.1875,

2 T.A., S.S. 206, R.683/76, Landdros to State Secretary, 28.3.1876; S.S. 208, R.1009/76, Merensky to Burgers, 2.5.1876; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, 2.5.1876.

in contradiction to that of the Z.A.R. and in turn encouraged and required the Maroteng rulers to establish and entrench a larger definition of the area and population over which they held sway. But the establishment and recognition of the ultimate authority of the paramountcy did not afford it the possibility of absolute control over the actions of subordinate groups. Indeed, the evidence suggests that while Sekhukhune was intent on taking advantage of the changed situation in the early 1870s to extend his authority, the ambitions of the paramountcy did not constitute the prime mover in the unfolding pattern of events. To some extent Sekhukhune was pulled in the wake of more militant subordinate chiefdoms and groups intent on exploiting the authority of the paramount in order to enhance their local power, to extend their independence of control, to resist exaction and to secure their right to the land upon which they had settled.

It is thus clear that Pedi expansion in the 1870s was the consequence of a complex interaction of factors. In part it became a metaphor for a variety of processes of conflict and change at work within the eastern Transvaal, and cannot be reduced to the consequences of the ambitions or strategy of the paramount. This is not, however, to suggest that the paramountcy played an entirely passive role or that it was not intent on extending its area of authority and control as opportunities presented themselves. On the contrary it has been argued that from the early 1870s Sekhukhune became increasingly militant in his claims to hegemony over both land and people and in his demands that his subjects should be allowed to travel through Z.A.R. territory unmolested. The fact that Sekhukhune pressed these demands and was not prepared to concede them was one vital dimension to the mounting conflicts in the region. The

posture adopted by the Maroteng chiefdom was partly responsible for enabling groups on the periphery of the polity to challenge the authority and control of local officials and subjects of the Z.A.R. and fed the fears of the white community. The point remains, however, that the paramountcy was also struggling to control the consequences of processes of change at work within the region, and there was a marked disjuncture between its claims to authority and its effective control. Equally, there is almost no evidence that the paramountcy's military intentions ever amounted to more than defence against possible attack, and Sekhukhune appears to have remained intent on avoiding clashes between his subjects and those of the Z.A.R.

While the paramount was nonetheless prepared to risk the threat of war rather than forego his claims or deny his authority, he consistently attempted to avoid precipitating open conflict and appears to have believed that the force of his claims would be recognised without recourse to war.[1]

---

[1] See below, Part 2.

PART TWO

The picture of the position and policy of the paramountcy presented above does not, however, correspond to the image of the powers and ambitions of Sekhukhune which, to an extent, shaped the perceptions and responses of the white community and its leaders in the eastern Transvaal. By the outbreak of war in 1876, there appears to have been a widespread popular fear that Pedi regiments would sweep through the Lydenburg district, and local officials were persuaded of the fact that the paramountcy was committed to an aggressive course of action. This section explores the way in which this image of the Pedi polity developed in the 1870s. In particular, it examines the way in which the limited channels of communication which existed between the polity and the Z.A.R. allowed key middlemen to control and interpret the flow of information. It further portrays the changing attitudes both of these middlemen and of the most prominent local officials. These are crucial to an understanding of the unfolding pattern of events and the changing perception of them, which led to increasingly strident local demands that the power of the Pedi polity should be curbed or broken.

It is almost as difficult to reconstruct popular attitudes amongst the white community on the basis of existing evidence, as it is to give an account of commoner attitudes within the Pedi polity. Some observations can, however, be made. The Pedi polity had grown out of the processes of conflict and change at work within the eastern Transvaal, and to an extent had become a metaphor for them. With the heightened intensity of conflict within, and the passage of large armed groups of migrants through the domain of the Z.A.R. in the 1870s, the growing fears of the white community found expression in increasing prevalence of rumours concerning the hostile intentions of the paramount. Marks has argued in her account of the background to the 1906 rebellion in Natal, that

the intensification of rumour towards the end of 1905 was a clear warning that tension was mounting in the colony and that contact between ruler and ruled was breaking down. In the different context of the eastern Transvaal in the 1870s it seems likely that rumour was also in part an index of mounting local conflict and the attempts to provide explanations for the courses of these disputes.[1]

Along with fears about the intentions of the Pedi paramountcy went re-awakened alarm at the possibility of a conspiracy between the rulers of the more powerful African polities in and beyond the Transvaal. The fear of an alliance of this kind, particularly one involving the Zulu and the Pedi is a recurring theme in the history of the eastern Transvaal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The absence of hard evidence to sustain the fear does not appear to have lessened the conviction with which it was advanced and held. In the troubled circumstances of the early 1870s, Zulu emissaries were once again alleged to be flitting through the eastern Transvaal en route to both the Pedi polity and the Ndzundza chiefdom. The intensification of rumour and spread of alarm over possible alliance and attack was probably also influenced by a growing awareness of the extent to which the regional balance of power had shifted away from the Z.A.R.[2]

---

1 S. Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, the 1906-1908 Disturbances in Natal (Oxford, 1970), p.145. See, for example, T.A., S.S. 174, R.1302/74, Brutucks to State Secretary, 14.7.1874; S.S. 173, R.1080/74, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary; R.1128/74, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary; LL 20, 212/74, Landdros to Uitvoerende Raad, 11.7.1874; LM 1, 254/74, Grützner to Meintjies, 11.12.1874; S.S. 179, R.1933/74, Meintjies to State President, 11.12.1874; LM 1, 292/74, State Secretary to Landdros, 27.12.1874.

2 T.A., LM 1, 94/73, Joubert to Landdros, 3.4.1873; Montieth, 'Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune', pp. 91-3.

Marks has also pointed out in relation to colonial Natal that rumour was partly a consequence of defective communication and the different ways in which the same events were perceived by black and white.[1] In the eastern Transvaal the possibilities for rumours to flourish and alarms to spread were enhanced by the absence of formal or neutral channels of communication between the Pedi polity and Z.A.R. authorities. While sporadic exchanges of messages and messengers took place, and some Boer notables and officials made visits to the paramount and his subordinate chiefs on both public and private matters, the Berlin missionaries continued to play a key role as intermediaries. These missionaries were, however, far from neutral. After their departure from the Pedi heartland in 1865 and 1866, their view that Christian advance could only be secured through the restructuring of African society was re-enforced. In particular, they came to view chiefly power as a central obstacle to missionary progress. To a number of the B.M.S. missionaries, Sekhukhune personified all that was wrong with chiefly power. The principal missionary intermediary from the late 1860s was Albert Nachtigal, both because of the proximity of his station to the town of Lydenburg and because of his continued contacts with Sekhukhune. Other missionaries, most notably Alexander Merensky, continued to be one vital source of comment on developments within Pedi society. Missionaries forwarded and translated messages, interpreted their meaning and shaped their nuances. They thus constituted a distorting prism through which information was refracted - a prism which was moulded by missionary interest, perception and prejudice.[2]

---

[1] Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, p. 145.

[2] T.A., S.S. 200, R.3032/75, Nachtigal to State President, 11.2.1875; S.N. 7, Merensky to Kruger, 8.7.1881; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 20.10.1874; U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, pp. 203-8, 19.7.1879.

Despite the fact that Nachtigal's view and explanations formed part of the basis for contemporary intitiatives and have profoundly influenced many of the historical accounts, little attempt has been made to understand the interests which shaped his perception and interpretation. By the early 1870s, Nachtigal's achievements had been overshadowed by Merensky's successes at Botsabelo. While the Lydenburg mission station stagnated and lost converts to Botsabelo, the latter grew apace. Nachtigal's resentment at the lack of distinction attending his career was not eased by the death of his wife in 1871 and the steady deterioration of his own health. From 1873, he delegated much of the responsibility for his station to H. Düring, and in July of 1875 he finally formally resigned from the B.M.S. With his career as a missionary drawing to a close, Nachtigal's possibilities for future employment and advancement increasingly rested on his medical skills and on his expertise in relation to the Pedi polity and the services that he could render to the state. He also attempted to secure his future by dabbling in land speculation. These excursions into the land market in the main related to property situated in the northern reaches of the Lydenburg district.[1]

Nachtigal also played an important part in negotiations between Lydenburg officials and the community at Mafolofolo. He was the principal source of information and interpretation about Dinkwanyane's intentions and the nature of his relationship with Sekhukhune. Significantly, Nachtigal was one of the Berlin missionaries most hostile to Dinkwanyane and his followers being permitted to depart from Botsabelo. He insisted that the proper course of action was to enforce strict church

---

[1] U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 2, p. 181, 5.5.1877; T.A., S.N. 4, Nachtigal to Lanyon, 4.8.1880; A. 371, 3/13, Nachtigal to State President, 22.8.1875; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 13.5.1873, n.d., June? 1873, 13.5.1875; T.A., LL 73, Register of owners of farms.

discipline on the renegade community and deny them a resident missionary. Nachtigal's hostility towards Dinkwanyane grew during the course of 1874 and 1875. The latter's success in recruiting followers from among the residents on Lydenburg station ruined the limited success which Nachtigal had achieved by 1873 and the remaining converts were of wavering and divided loyalty. The continued presence and appeal of the Mafolofolo community threatened to entirely undermine the station. Dinkwanyane's actions, however, posed a still more direct threat to Nachtigal's interests. The area of land to which Dinkwanyane laid claim included land to which Nachtigal had secured legal title and some of which he used for winter grazing for his stock. By 1875, Nachtigal was militant in his opinion that Dinkwanyane should be forced to accept the authority of church and state. He consistently portrayed Dinkwanyane as an agent of Sekhukhune, an interpretation which ran against the grain of much of the evidence which he succeeded in collecting.[1]

Nachtigal's influence grew throughout 1874 and 1875. Merensky, who had previously been the most influential missionary commentator on events within African society, was absent on leave in Germany during these years, and his replacement at Botsabelo, Heinrich Grützner, was content to play a limited role and restricted his comments on events to relaying rumours and fears of Pedi attacks to local officials. Nachtigal's authority was, however, particularly enhanced by the close relationship he established with H.W.A. Cooper who was appointed as Landdros of Lydenburg in July of 1874.

---

[1] See above, and B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 10.5.1874, 20.10.1874; B.M.B., 1876, pp. 302-4; T.A., S.S. 189, R.1373/75, Nachtigal to State President, 28.6.1875; A.371, 3/13, Nachtigal to State President, 22.8.1875.

This appointment was in part symptomatic of the changing political dispensation in the Transvaal ushered in by the election of President Burgers and the development of the gold fields. Cooper was a relatively recent settler in the Z.A.R. and was a qualified attorney. He established himself as a law agent in the Lydenburg area, drew an important part of his custom from the growing community on the gold fields and also acted more widely as a land agent.[1] His political views were shaped by the fact that he was 'an old friend and admirer of Burgers' and by his desire to realize the potential which the development of the gold fields and the influx of population had for the future of the region.[2] While he was thus well-equipped to deal with many aspects of the proposed new order, his grasp of the development and nature of the relationship established between the Pedi polity, the Swazi kingdom and the Z.A.R. appears to have been rather less secure. Initially lacking the relationships with longer established settlers in the district which had provided one source of information and support to his predecessors, he became increasingly reliant on the views and services of Nachtigal.

Cooper took office in the context of mounting local conflict and hostility over land and labour. In the forefront of these disputes in 1874 were the communities of gold miners. They displayed considerable hostility towards Sekhukhune and the Pedi polity. Their complaints were in part prompted by the difficulties experienced in securing and controlling a supply of labour. But a crucial cause of their discontent was the persistent rumours to the effect that both gold and diamonds were to be found in abundance in the Pedi domain. These rumours were probably fuelled

---

1 For Cooper's legal career and qualifications see T.A., S.S. R.2068/73, R.2106/73, R.2989/75, R.4441/77; see also, T.A., S.S. 206, R.622/76, Cooper to State Secretary, 21.3.1876 and encs.; LL 20, 88/74, Landdros to Cooper, 6.4.1874.

2 Gold Fields Mercury, 21.10.1876.

by the constant frustrations most suffered over their failure to 'strike it rich'. The communities of diggers offered rich ground for scapegoating and rumour to flourish. The Gold Fields Mercury commented in 1876:

> Those who have been on these Fields since they were first settled or from shortly afterwards will be aware that a general topic of conversation amongst the diggers has been and is the supposition that the most extensive gold fields, the richest deposits, are in Sekhukhune's country but cannot be developed because he (Sekukuni) will not allow people to dig or prospect in his country.[1]

Sekhukhune's refusal to allow prospectors access to the Pedi domain inflamed the diggers' belief that he stood between them and a new Eldorado, and in 1874, their sense of frustration was heightened by the reports which circulated that traces of gold had been found in the environs of Dinkwanyane's stronghold at Mafolofolo. A variety of strategems were concocted within the digger communities to undermine the independence of the Pedi polity, but most foundered because they were hopelessly remote from local political realities. However, in August of 1874, the Gold Commissioner at Pilgrims' Rest, claiming that an attack from Sekhukhune was imminent, placed a proclamation in the Gold Fields Mercury setting a price of £500 on Sekhukhune's head and £100 on that of his subordinate chiefs, all this being done in the name of the State President.[2]

This proclamation clearly came as a considerable and unwelcome surprise to Cooper. He immediately sought clarification from Burgers and reported that as far as he was aware all was 'peace and order' amongst the African population and that no attack or disturbance was to

---

[1] Ibid., 28.10.1876.

[2] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 10.5.1874, 15.8.1874, 20.10.1874; T.A., S.S. 173, R.1128/74, Landdros to State Secretary, 11.8.1874; LL 20, 215/74, Landdros to Gold Commissioner, 18.8.1874.

be expected unless it were provoked by the Gold Commissioner's actions. He succeeded in securing a disavowal from the State President of any authorisation for the proclamation and informed Sekhukhune to this effect. The proclamation was subsequently publicly withdrawn, but the incident can have done little to reassure the Pedi paramount of the benign intentions of his neighbours.[1]

Cooper had begun his term of office with the optimistic and misplaced belief that Dinkwanyane and his followers could be persuaded to recognise the authority of the Z.A.R. and that relations with Sekhukhune could be easily regularized. Sekhukhune responded to Cooper's initial overtures with the declaration that he wished to avoid fighting and war and hoped 'that the old time of friendship had come again'.[2] Dinkwanyane was, however, confronted by a rather more precise and far-reaching set of demands than those made upon the paramount, and he remained obdurate in his refusal to abandon his stronghold, to accept his liability to pay tax, or to render labour service. By the end of 1874, partly in consequence of the lack of headway he had made with Dinkwanyane, and partly under the influence of Nachtigal, Cooper's initial optimism had given way to the belief that an attack should be launched against Mafolofolo, or that Sekhukhune should be persuaded to attack the community.[3]

The latter belief betrayed once again Cooper's shaky grasp of the local political situation. While Sekhukhune sought to distance himself from some of the actions of his younger brother, he was unlikely to enforce the authority of the Z.A.R. over a community which declared itself to consist of his subjects, living on land which formed part of his

---

1 Ibid.

2 T.A., S.S. 176, R.1524/74, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, and encs.

3 T.A., S.S. 179, R.1923/74, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 14.12.1874.

domain, particularly at a time when the paramount had every reason to be gravely suspicious of the intentions of subjects and officials of the Z.A.R.

The impact of the proclamation issued by the Gold Fields Commissioner was compounded by the fact that Nachtigal, in the professed belief that the information would restrain Sekhukhune and Dinkwanyane, had conveyed to them details of the various plans hatched against their persons on the gold fields. Cooper's attempts to secure the paramount's assistance in an attack on Mafolofolo can have done little to allay either of their fears. Cooper gave them further cause for alarm when, for reasons which remain obscure, he refused to accept the credentials of a messenger sent by Sekhukhune to discuss the Landdros's plans in relation to Dinkwanyane. Suspecting that the emissary was an imposter, Cooper placed and kept him in gaol. The consequence of this incident was a breach in direct communication between the Landdros and the Pedi paramount which lasted well into 1875. An additional source of both grievance and suspicion to the rulers of the Pedi polity were the attempts made by local officials to prevent arms traders reaching their domain, and the seizure of arms. It was thus not only the white community which suffered from fears and rumours that an attack was imminent; clearly similar concern afflicted the inhabitants of the Pedi domain, and they probably had rather better cause for their alarm. The substantive point is, however, that the events of 1875 and 1876 took place against a background of, and were shaped by, growing mutual suspicion.[1]

---

[1] Ibid., S.S. 176, R.1610, 74, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 17.10.1874; S.S. 189, R.1351/75, Statement of Sekhukhune's messenger, 7.6.1875; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8 , Tagebuch Lydenburg, 10.5.1874.

In this climate of distrust Nachtigal's influence grew apace. Throughout the first half of 1875 he painted an increasingly ominous picture of local developments in his letters both to Landdros Cooper and to the acting State President, P. Joubert. He argued that the actions of Johannes Dinkwanyane and his followers were transforming the consciousness of the African population and that the belief was spreading that the umbrella afforded by the Pedi polity offered them freedom of action and immunity from Z.A.R. reprisal. He suggested that the new settlements south of the Steelpoort and the denial of access to their land to white landowners had occurred at the instigation of the Pedi paramount. In his portrayal the paramount was engaged in a process of expansion by delegation and stealth and also might at any moment resort to open warfare. In his view, the only way in which peace and order could be restored in the region was for Sekhukhune's power to be broken. Cooper initially believed that Dinkanyane and Sekhukhune represented at least partially distinct problems, but by April of 1875, he was at one with Nachtigal in the belief that the threats that they constituted to the authority of the Z.A.R. were inextricably linked, and that a war with the Pedi polity was the appropriate and likely consequence. From early in 1875 Nachtigal and Cooper set about preparing for such a war and in particular, concentrated on securing military assistance from Mampuru and the Swazi kingdom.[1]

Cooper was later pilloried for these activities and accused of exceeding his authority and even precipitating war, but there is evidence

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 187, R.807/75, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 13.4.1875, and enc. Nachtigal to Landdros, 17.4.1875; S.S. 189, R.1315/75, Nachtigal to State President, 14.6.1875; R.1373/75, Nachtigal to State President, 28.6.1875; A.371, 3/13, Nachtigal to Landdros, 9.11.1875.

which gives tantalizing glimpses of the extent to which both Nachtigal and Cooper kept the President and some members of the Executive Council informed of their plans and intrigues and received at least their tacit support.[1] A full account of the role played by the central government cannot be embarked upon in the context of this chapter. It must wait detailed research on the nature and development of the Z.A.R. state and the crises of liquidity and control and the need for reform which it confronted in the late 1860s and early 1870s. In particular, the policies pursued by the Burgers' administration after 1872 require evaluation against this background and against the need to restructure and extend the control exercised by the state over both the white and African population settled in and on the periphery of its domain. It is possible, however, to advance some tentative explanations and to demonstrate that the Burgers' administration was rather less the victim of circumstance than has hitherto been suggested.

As has been discussed at greater length above, when Burgers took office in 1872, he confronted a pressing need to institute financial and administrative reforms. One of his immediate concerns was to organize the more efficient collection of revenue from both the white and African population of the Transvaal. In particular the income from African taxes, rather than constituting a substantial revenue, actually contributed derisory amounts to the state. This situation was unlikely to change while major African societies remained independent of Z.A.R. control. Probably the key obstacle to the collection of taxes in much of the northern and eastern Transvaal was the power and independence of the Pedi polity. More pressing and immediately dangerous to the state in the aftermath of the Keate award and the discovery of gold in the

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 161, R.2345/77, Petition from Cooper requesting re-instatement as Landdros 14.9.1877, and minutes and encs.

eastern Transvaal was that Pedi independence and claims to the land could lead to the loss of the gold fields in a repetition of the events which had led to the loss of the diamond fields in 1871. The Keate award, after all, had recognised the claims to sovereignty and land of the Griqua and Tlhaping in Griqualand-West at the expense of those of the Z.A.R.[1]

Thus from the inception of his Presidency, Burgers had reason to fear the consequences of the continued independence of African polities in the eastern Transvaal for the future of his state. The increasing centrality of the gold fields to his plans for development focused his attention still more closely on that region. In his first years in office, Burgers made a number of visits to the eastern Transvaal, held extensive discussions with local officials, diggers and missionaries, and was clearly persuaded of the need to regularize relationships with the surrounding African polities and ensure their recognition of the authority of the Z.A.R. He was particularly impressed in 1873 with the opinions of Albert Merensky, and while the latter's advice remained unrecorded, it is probable that it conformed to his opinion that an essential barrier to progress (missionary and otherwise) was the independence of the Pedi and Ndzundza polities. It is also likely that the opinions of the diggers reinforced this view. Thus, when Burgers issued confidential instructions that military surveys should be conducted of African strongholds in the area, he was probably responding to the views which he heard and held in 1873, and to the various alarms of 1874 - particularly those which arose from the fear that Sekhukhune, through the person of Edwards, would appeal for imperial intervention or support for his claims to the land.[2] This is not, of course, to suggest

---

[1] For a brief disucssion of the Keate award see T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa, A Modern History (London, 1977), pp. 127-8.

[2] T.A., S.S. 161, R.1580/73, Report of the visit of President Burgers to the goldfields, 1.9.1873; S.S. 181 (confidential), Supl. 8/74, State Secretary to Landdros of Lydenburg, 13.3.1874 and (confidential) Supl. 6/74, President Burgers to Capt. Riedel and N. Grobbelar, 4.4.1874.

that by this stage Burgers had determined on a policy of military confrontation, but it does suggest that by the end of 1874 he was seriously contemplating the possibility of war.

During the course of 1875, matters moved a stage further, and from early in that year there is evidence of plans being laid for war with the Pedi polity and of the awareness of, and participation in, these plans by the President and his executive. By that stage Burgers had departed for Europe with the goal of raising the capital needed for his cherished scheme to construct a railway linking the Transvaal to Delagoa Bay harbour. P. Joubert was appointed acting President in his stead and appears to have gone considerably further in his preparations for war. Unfortunately the documentary record reveals little more than glimpses of the nature of these plans. Some of the most revealing of these are provided by the correspondence and diaries of Albert Nachtigal. On 13 May 1975, Nachtigal wrote to the Mission Director in Berlin:

> I read the secret orders from the President to Mr. Cooper. If it comes to war I will go with the army as preacher for the blacks if my health permits ... I could write a great deal about the plan but it is still secret, in time you will hear everything ... God's mills grind slowly but fine; Johannes and Sekukuni will also learn this lesson but only when it is too late.[1]

There is little evidence to elaborate on Joubert's thinking and goals in relation to the Pedi polity at this stage, but he supported an expansionist policy over the border disputes with the Zulu Kingdom throughout 1875.[2] The evidence does suggest, however, that an increasingly sympathetic and supportive executive was one important dimension to the background against which in 1875, Cooper and Nachtigal prepared for, and argued for, war. Indeed until at least the middle of the year,

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Nachtigal to Wangemann, 13.5.1875.

[2] Montieth, 'Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune', pp. 54-6, 61-2.

Burgers appears to have been kept at least partially informed of these developments and his suggestion was that if it came to war, the aid of the Swazi should be sought.[1]

From May of 1875, Cooper, with the encouragement of Nachtigal, embarked on a policy of confrontation. In that month he sent a message to Sekhukhune warning him to prevent his subjects settling on the southern side of the Steelpoort River, enquiring whether or not Johannes was his subject and demanding that Sekhukhune should curb him or run the risk of war. Sekhukhune's response was to deny the right to the land of the Z.A.R. and to affirm that Dinkwanyane was his subject. In June, fresh alarms were caused by Msuthfo raiding cattle. Sekhukhune, however, returned the stolen cattle with the assurance that despite the provocations he had suffered, including the seizure and imprisonment of his messenger, he did not wish war.[2]

Meanwhile, Nachtigal set out to gain Mampuru's support for his cause. On the 14th June 1875, with Cooper absent from Lydenburg, he corresponded directly with Joubert. He wrote that the Landdros had informed him of the President's determination that an attack should be launched against Sekhukhune and that in consequence, with the support of Cooper, he had begun to negotiate with Mampuru to gain his assistance in persuading subordinate chiefs within the Pedi polity to renounce their allegiance to Sekhukhune. On 28 June, Nachtigal once again wrote confidentially to the State President, this time informing him of his belief that war was imminent, that Sekhukhune was planning to launch

---

1 T.A., A.371, 5/19, Burgers to Joubert, 8.3.1875 and Burgers to Joubert, 21.8.1875.

2 T.A., S.S. 192, R.1695/75, Message of Landdros of Lydenburg to Sekukuni, 20.5.1875; and Sekhukhune's response, 3.6.1875; S.S. 189, R.1280/75, Landdros of Lydenburg to State President, 8.6.1875; R.1351/75, Schoeman to State Secretary, 22.6.1875; R.1379/75, Schultze to Schoeman, 23.6.1875.

attacks against the white inhabitants of the district and that Dinkwanyane planned to make all blacks cast aside the authority of the Z.A.R.[1]

Nachtigal also included details of an interview with messengers from Mampuru. They had told him that the Swazi kingdom was prepared to launch its regiments against the Pedi. Nachtigal assured them that the whites would shortly make war on the Pedi and therefore required the assistance of Mampuru. He further suggested that if Mampuru gave this help he would be made ruler in Sekhukhune's stead, on the principal condition that he accepted the authority of the Z.A.R. Early in July, Nachtigal travelled to Pretoria and appears to have had meetings with Joubert. Throughout the remainder of 1875 he kept the acting State President informed over the state of the district and preparations for war. There is thus clear evidence of the executive's awareness of the strategems of Nachtigal and Cooper. There is also some evidence that Dinkwanyane and Sekhukune gained some knowledge of their secret activities. The negotiations with the Swazi and with Mampuru were probably not easily kept hidden and must have appeared particularly ominous to the Pedi rulers. Thus aside from the overt actions of Cooper, the covert initiatives undertaken by him and with his authority can have done little to reassure either Dinkwanyane or Sekhukhune of the peaceful intentions of their white neighbours.[2]

By the second half of the year, these preparations, and the mounting local crisis over land and labour had persuaded the executive and Lydenburg

---

1 T.A., S.S. 189, R.1315/75, Nachtigal to State President, 14.6.1875; R.1373/75, Nachtigal to State President, 28.6.1875.

2 Ibid.; R.1449/75, Landdros of Lydenburg to State President, 13.6.1875; A.371, 13/3, Nachtigal to State President, 22.8.1875.

officials to bring still more direct pressure to bear on the Mafolofolo community. In September the acting Landdros, C. Schultze, visited Johannes Dinkwanyane armed with a letter signed by the State President and the Uitvoerende Raad which ordered him to submit to the authority of the state, and to pay taxes within four weeks or face dire consequences. Though Dinkwanyane once again denied the authority of the Z.A.R. and failed to meet the deadline, no more concrete action was taken against him.[1]

The Jancowitz incident, which is widely and incorrectly held to have precipitated the 1876 war, occurred six months later on 13 March. Although it is usually regarded as an example of the aggressive posture adopted by Sekhukhune and Dinkwanyane a closer examination of the historical record suggests that it stemmed from the continuing pursuit of a policy of confrontation by local officials. Jancowitz was a recent settler from the Cape who had bought land in the Lydenburg area without having had a chance to inspect it. The incident occurred when he travelled with assistant Veldcornet van Kraaijenburg to erect beacons on his farm. The farm lay in the immediate environs of Mafolofolo, and Johannes' followers refused him permission to erect the beacons and prevented him from cutting wood on his land the following day. There are a number of reasons for thinking that this incident was the result of rather more premeditation on the part of the officials involved than they revealed in their reports. Cooper had acted as the land agent for Jancowitz and thus had both a personal interest in and probably an awareness of the farm's situation and the likely consequences of an attempt to place beacons on it. Van Kraaijenburg's feeling against the

---

[1] S.S. 194, R.2139/75, Landdros to State Secretary, 1.10.1875 and Schultze to Landdros, 1.10.1875.

Mafolofolo community had also recently been inflamed by the desertion of his farm labour to join Dinkwanyane's followers. The likelihood is that Cooper was once again attempting to force the matter to a decisive conclusion. Indeed, his immediate response was to threaten Dinkwanyane with attack and to mobilize local commandos to make a show of strength at Mafolofolo; but he was dissuaded by P. de Villiers, J.J. Burgers, P.J. Coetzee and other longstanding residents of the district from embarking on such a militarily risky course of action. Thwarted on this front he turned his attention to mounting a sustained and increasingly strident campaign to enlist the aid of the central government and the Swazi in launching an attack against the Pedi polity.[1]

Cooper argued that war was the inevitable consequence of the denial of the Z.A.R.'s right to the land, and the threat which this constituted to the state's ultimate control of both farms and gold fields, and the future development of the district and the Republic. Crucially, he argued despite Sekhukhune's continuing denials that the paramount's instigation lay behind Dinkwanyane's actions and that a solution to the problem posed by the behaviour of the latter demanded that the power of the former should be broken. While this was clearly a caricature of the relationship which actually existed, it nonetheless contained one important element of truth: the ability of the Mafolofolo community to reject the authority and legitimacy of the Z.A.R. was partially dependent on the existence of a powerful and independent Pedi polity. Sekhukhune's response to the threats of attack on Mafolofolo was to despatch a regiment to assist in the defence of the community. The paramount could not

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 206, R.622/76, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 21.3.1876 and encs. and R.683/76, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 28.3.1876; S.S. 207, R.810/76, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 8.4.1876; Gold Fields Mercury, 25.11.1876; Transvaal Argus and Potchefstroom Gazette, 14.4.1876.

lightly allow an attack on a community which professed allegiance to him and which claimed to live on land which fell within his domain. He had also to consider the likelihood that such an attack would merely be a prelude to an offensive against the heartland of the polity.[1]

With these developments, settler fears of Pedi attack reached new heights. The farmers in northern reaches of the district went into laager and the B.M.S. missionary, E. Bauling, abandoned his mission station and, accompanied by his tenants, sought refuge in the town of Lydenburg. The Gold Fields Mercury reported on 9 April:

> Wars and rumours of wars are all the vogue here just now. Lydenburg has been in a state of alarm all the past week. All kinds of reports, delightfully vague but sufficiently alarming, are circulating as to what Secoecoeni is going to do.[2]

Petitions were despatched from the various wards of the district to the Uitvoerende Raad expressing the alarm felt by the inhabitants at the possibility of attack and requesting the assistance and protection of the central government. In late April, Veldcornet P. de Villiers and others from the Ohrigstad ward who had previously exercised a restraining influence on Cooper joined in the chorus demanding aid, their fears magnified by the theft of 150 cattle in the ward on 16 April.[3]

However, Sekhukhune and Dinkwanyane, once the immediate threat of an attack on Mafolofolo had passed, adopted a markedly conciliatory policy, though without conceding their basic claims. The regiment which had been despatched to assist the defence of Dinkwanyane's stronghold was withdrawn. Sekhukhune sent men to labour on the land of some influential farmers and by 8 May, the 150 cattle which had been stolen

---

1 Ibid.; A.371, 4/15, Statement of messengers from Sekoekoeni, 24.5.1876.

2 Gold Fields Mercury, 14.4.1876; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 4.4.1876, 6.4.1876, 11.4.1876.

3 T.A., S.S. 208, R.1001/76, de Villiers to State President, 1.5.1876.

from de Villiers by followers of Msuthfo were returned on the orders of the paramount. Dinkwanyane offered to supply labour to aid the farmers of the Waterfalls River and Krugerspost areas with their harvest. These gestures, however, did little to still the fears of the white community which were, by this stage, thoroughly aroused.[1]

Thus in April of 1876, President Burgers returned to Pretoria, after an absence of fourteen months from South Africa, to find that the eastern Transvaal was in a state of turmoil with the white community clamouring for protection and local officials increasingly unanimous and insistent in their demands for military assistance against the Pedi polity. Early in the month, the acting President - Joubert - had expressed his wish to mobilize a commando, but he claimed that the imminent return of Burgers and the latter's desire to avoid open hostilities in the Transvaal precluded him from such a course of action. Burgers, determined not to jeopardize his railway scheme, attempted to defuse the situation on his return. He told the Volksraad that he was not convinced of the truth of the rumours concerning the danger of a Pedi attack. He sent two letters to Sekhukhune, one of which went via Merensky who had resumed control at Botsabelo. Their substance was to urge the necessity of a peaceful solution to the disputes on the paramount.[2] These letters were, however, to be overtaken by events.

The mounting clamour from the eastern Transvaal, and the increasingly sympathetic attitude to it of the members of the Volksraad, played a part in forcing the President's hand. So also did the fact that inaction on the part of the central government carried the danger that requests might be made for external assistance - particularly from members of the digger communities - which could provide a pretext for imperial

---

1 T.A., S.S. 208, R.1087/76, de Villiers to State Secretary, 8.5.1876; S.S. 209, R.1399/76, de Villiers to Landdros of Lydenburg, 1.6.1876; Transvaal Argus and Potchefstroom Gazette (Gold Fields correspondent), 5.5.1876, 12.5.1876, 23.6.1876.

2 Gold Fields Mercury, 14.4.1876; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 314-5; Transvaal Argus and Potchefstroom Gazette, 6.5.1876.

intervention. Equally, the threat to the state's authority represented by the actions and claims of Dinkwanyane and Sekhukhune, particularly the danger of loss of control of a substantial area of land, including portions of the gold fields, came to represent a potentially greater threat to Burgers' attempts to raise capital for a railway than did the outbreak of war: gold and state land were the vital resources underpinning the railway plan. Burgers needed to be seen to be taking decisive action, and on 16 May with the Volksraad in uproar at renewed reports of hostile actions on the part of Dinkwanyane, a formal declaration of war against the Pedi polity was made by the legislature and approved by the President and the Uitvoerende Raad.[1]

Appropriately enough, the reported incident which so inflamed the tempers of the members of the Volksraad, and which provided the final pretext for war proved to be an act of resistance on the part of Africans within the Z.A.R. domain rather than an act of provocation by either Dinkwanyane or Sekhukhune. On 10 May, the B.M.S. missionary, Bauling, along with remnants of his congregation, visited the mission station abandoned in the earlier panic. During their visit an armed party of Dinkwanyane's followers arrived and the converts left with them. On his return to Lydenburg the following day, Bauling reported to Cooper that members of his congregation had been abducted. Cooper made this incident the basis of yet another report stressing the precarious condition of the district. By 12 May, however, Bauling had discovered that the so-called attack had been arranged by the converts who had been denied the right to leave the town of Lydenburg and who had feared attempting to escape unaided. Bauling's awareness of the extent of his misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the incident was further

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 208, R.1099/75, Merensky to State President, 2.5.1876; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 244-5.

strengthened by a letter which he received from one of the escapees, Paulus, who claimed they had fled because they had been so harassed by the whites.[1]

Burgers resigned himself to the prospect of war, writing to Captain R. Bell:

> You will be sorry to hear that matters in Lydenburg have come to such a crisis that the Volksraad has decided that the Secoecoene matter must be settled by force of arms. I did all I could to prevent an expedition but the die is cast ... Unless we now shut up Secoecoene we may as well drop the whole district of Lydenburg and more.[2]

After the earlier letters and messages from the President, the declaration of war came as something of a surprise to the rulers of the Pedi polity. When Merensky visited Sekhukhune late in 1876, the paramount claimed to be bemused as to the cause of the war. Sekhukhune recalled that while Dinkwanyane had given some provocation, Burgers had then sent two letters to the paramountcy and that he had been in full agreement with the contents. However, before he had had a chance to reply, the Z.A.R. launched an army against the heartland of his domain.[3] In fact, messengers from Sekhukhune reached Pretoria a week after the declaration of war. They bore the message that the paramount wished to live in peace with his white neighbours. They explained that while a regiment had been despatched to Mafolofolo it had been under orders 'not to shoot first but in the event of the whites shooting at them first they were entitled to retaliate'. The emissaries also re-iterated that Dinkwanyane was a Maroteng subject living on Maroteng land.[4]

---

1 B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 2.5.1876, 10.5.1876, 13.5.1876, 20.5.1876; T.A., S.S. 208, R.1095/76, Landdros of Lydenburg to State Secretary, 11.5.1876.

2 T.A., A. 6062, 2, Burgers to Bell, 17.5.1876.

3 Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 322.

4 T.A., A.371, 4/15, Statement of messengers from Sekoekoeni, 24.5.1876.

It thus seems to have been the case that in the context of 1876, both Sekhukhune and Burgers were reluctant to precipitate war. It seems likely that both were to some extent dragged in the wake of the actions of their subordinates. However, beyond their mutual desire to avoid open conflict they held different and incompatible views of the situation. While Burgers was sceptical of some of the alarmist reports from the eastern Transvaal he never wavered from the position that both Sekhukhune and Dinkwanyane were subjects of the Z.A.R. and lived on land belonging to that state. The Maroteng paramountcy and the community at Mafolofolo consistently refused either to give up their claims to the land or to recognize the hegemony and authority of the Z.A.R. In the context of heightened competition for land, labour and markets in the 1870s, these fundamental contradictions emerged into clearer and clearer focus and increasingly jeopardized the pattern of co-existence in the eastern Transvaal which had characterised much of the 1850s and 1860s.

PART THREE

The Campaign and its Consequences

The history of the campaign against the Pedi polity in 1876 is relatively well known.[1] In July 1876, the largest army thitherto mobilized by the Z.A.R. took to the field under the command of President Burgers, with M.W. Pretorius as Commandant General and N. Smit as his deputy. Some 2000 burghers, 2400 Swazi warriors, 600 Transvaal Africans and a non-combatant force from Botsabelo participated in the campaign. The army was divided into an eastern and western section with the aim of subduing the population on both sides of the Leddu Mountains before launching an attack on the Maroteng stronghold. 600 burghers, mainly from the Lydenburg district, were despatched with the Swazi army to take Johannes Dinkwanyane's stronghold at Mafolofolo, before joining the rest of the army for what was expected to be the final battle in the Pedi heartland. The campaign, from the point of view of the Z.A.R., was an almost unmitigated disaster and the first part of this section addresses itself to the reasons for its failure and the consequences thereof for the state.

Morale appears to have been low amongst the burghers from the outset. Existing explanations for this have leaned heavily on the religious and political objects to President Burgers' leadership, and the refusal of S.J.P. Kruger to accept military command.[2] However, the campaign in many of its aspects and results conformed to, rather than departed from, the recurring pattern of military actions in the Transvaal since the 1850s. This suggests that rather more profound

---

[1] The fullest accounts are Otto, 'Sekoekoeni Oorlog', and Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 245-74.

[2] See, for example, Bonner, 'The Swazi', p. 296; Engelbrecht, Burgers, pp. 147-54.

causes than leadership alone need to be sought to explain the alienation of the members of the commandos. Throughout the pre-annexation period residents from any one region of the state showed considerable reluctance when it came to rendering military assistance to inhabitants of other regions. This had been particularly marked in the Zoutpansberg campains of the late 1860s. Indeed, eastern Transvaalers had been amongst the most loath to assist their northern brethren. In 1876, the bulk of the commando was made up of burghers from Pretoria, Potchefstroom and Rustenburg who, while no doubt agreeing with the necessity of bringing the African population under control, probably felt in the turbulent 1870s that their own local problems required their attention rather more pressingly than did those of the east. Further, while mobilization at any time during the annual agricultural and pastoral cycle posed some problems for the rural population, June and July were the months in which the crucial movement of stock from the highveld to lowveld and bushveld winter grazing pastures should have been taking place. The sense of apprehension which filled the burghers as they made their way towards the rugged and harsh heartland of the Pedi polity cannot have been lessened by their fears for the safety of their families and herds.[1]

The tactics adopted by the Pedi army did little to ease these fears. Regiments traversed the countryside carrying off stock and destroying property. The army, however, avoided combat in the open which would have rendered them vulnerable to the fire-power and mobility of the Boer forces. The members of the commandos therefore faced the prospect of being left with no alternative but to launch assaults on inaccessible and fortified strongholds under heavy and accurate fire from the defenders. Attacks of this kind naturally entailed risking

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 248, 251-2; Aylward, The Transvaal, p.37.

heavy casualties among the assailants. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s commandos had baulked at such ventures and had relied with very variable success in the eastern and northern Transvaal on protracted sieges, or more usually, had employed the services of African auxiliaries and allies to undertake the brunt of the fighting. In particular, the Swazi army - constituted from standing regiments with a developed military ethos - was capable of withstanding much higher casualty levels than were the regionally organized and clientship-based commandos.[1]

From early on in the 1876 campaign the various attacks launched on groups settled on the outskirts of the Pedi domain - most particularly those on the 'Kaffir Gibraltar' of Mathebi, and on Maserumule's stronghold near Magnet-heights - made it clear that it would be no easy matter to take the heavily fortified and defended Pedi capital, situated as it was in the Leolu mountains. Even in the campaign's earliest stages, siege was suggested as an alternative to frontal attack. Siege tactics, however, exposed another key weakness of the attacking forces: the organization of the army and the resources of the state ruled out a protracted campaign. The sagging morale of the burghers was partially restored by the successful storming of Mathebi's stronghold after two days of fighting by some 1000 burghers and 400 African auxiliaries. This limited advance was, however, outweighed by the events surrounding the attack on Mafolofolo on 13 July which proved disastrous to the expedition. The Swazi warriors who led the attack found that once again their Boer allies failed to render them effective support and, while they penetrated to the heart of the settlement and killed Johannes Dinkwanyane, they suffered heavy casualties. The Swazi army had the experiences of 1869 to warn them of the danger of being trapped

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 245-8; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 23.6.1876, 26.6.1876, 28.6.1876, 30.6.1876.

in the valleys and gorges of the Leolu Mountains under Pedi fire. Confronted with such uncertain support from the Z.A.R. forces the Swazi quit the campaign.[1]

President Burgers thus found himself deserted by the force which would have been used to spearhead the attack on the Maroteng capital and which, no doubt, would have sustained the bulk of the casualties. The 1700 burghers and 600 Africans who still remained in the field by the end of July faced the grim prospect of storming the most heavily defended of all the Pedi strongholds. A desultory attack was finally launched on 1 August and quickly collapsed when the assailants, encountering stern resistance, refused to advance further. A Krygsraad decision on the following day to fine the burghers who had refused to attack was countered by a petition which appears to have had the support of the majority. It read

> We are all entirely unwilling to storm Secoecoeni's Mountain for the reason that we see no chance of safeguarding our lives or of conquering the kaffer. But we propose a plan to destroy the crops of the kaffer in the coming year so as to starve him out and promise obedience in protecting the borders with patrols.[2]

Confronted by this response, the President and the Krygsraad had little option, other than conceding complete defeat, but to adopt the strategy suggested by the petitioners. In order to put into effect the proposal that Pedi pastoral and agricultural production should be disrupted, it was decided that three forts should be built within the Pedi domain. In the event, only two were constructed and considerable difficulty was experienced initially in keeping them manned. Fort Weaber was erected on a plateau to the west of the Leolu Mountains and

---

1 Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 254-60; B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 15.7.1876.

2 Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 263.

occupied by 100 Middelburg burghers under the command of Captain Ferreira. Fort Burgers was erected in the bushveld near the confluence of the Steelpoort and Speckboom Rivers and had to be manned by a force which came to be known as the Lydenburg Volunteers - mercenaries recruited on diamond fields and gold fields by promises of pay, booty and land. This force was commanded, briefly, by the 'young, handsome and brave German Captain von Schlieckmann', but his charms proved no match for Pedi bullets and he was succeeded by Irish republican and diamond fields rebel, Alfred Aylward.[1]

Thus, added to the cost of the failed campaign was the expense of maintaining this military presence. The drain on the Republic's already fragile financial resources necessitated the imposition of a special war tax. This tax encountered widespread resistance, particularly in the eastern Transvaal, and further damaged the popularity of the Burgers' administration. If annexation had not intervened, it is not clear how the state could have continued to finance military measures against the Pedi polity.[2] While the forces of the Z.A.R. were not routed as the Swazi army had been in 1869, the discipline and unity of the army was only salvaged by avoiding a final confrontation with Pedi forces and by delegating the task of keeping the power of the paramountcy in check to partially mercenary contingents. The campaign left the weaknesses of the state and the commando system starkly revealed. Beyond the military reverse, however, was the economic and political cost; and the fact that with the coffers empty, the army in retreat and the administration's popularity at its lowest ebb, the hand of those pressing for the annexation of the Transvaal was greatly strengthened.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 264-74; Aylward, The Transvaal, p. 43 and also pp. 44-95.

[2] Ibid., Appelgryn, 'Burgers', pp. 178-9.

By the end of 1876, the Pedi polity, while unconquered, was by no means unscathed. A grinding drought afflicted the eastern Transvaal and its effects were worsened by the fact that it followed in the wake of a run of dry years in the early 1870s. The volunteer forces pursued a scorched-earth policy, applying the 'torch of civilization' to huts and grain stores and attacking those who attempted to work the land.[1] These activities in combination with the effects of the drought threatened to result in a serious shortfall of grain. Cultivation could continue relatively unaffected in the valleys and spurs of the Leolu Mountains and in the rugged terrain to the east of them, but the villagers who were dependent on cultivating the open-lying lands to the west of the mountains faced increasingly grave problems in providing for their subsistence. The Pedi also suffered from heavy cattle losses. Large numbers of cattle had been seized during the July campaign, and booty in cattle was one of the main incentives to the operations of the contingents manning the forts. In addition, Fort Weeber ensured that Pedi cattle were denied access to the rich grazing lands to the west of the Leolu, thus compounding the effects of the drought on the herds. The emergency exchange of cattle against grain also became increasingly common in 1876 and 1877. Observers who entered the country in February of 1877 reported that women and children to the west of the mountains looked to be starving and that cattle were in a very poor condition from having been kept enclosed in the mountains for so long. They also saw some 300-400 hides stacked at the capital which gives some indication of the extent of cattle loss. In addition to these pressures in 1876, the flow of migrants to the Cape and Natal was drastically curtailed, and with it the income to replace cattle loss, to purchase grain and replenish ammunition stores.[2]

---

[1] Aylward, The Transvaal, pp. 44-95, and in particular, p. 72.

[2] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 319-20; Volkstem, 7.3.1877; B.M.B., 1877, p. 181; B.M.B., 1878, pp. 401-10; Gold Fields Mercury, 25.11.1876, 16.12.1876, 23.12.1876.

The authority of the paramountcy was also challenged by the fact that a number of previously subordinate chiefdoms tendered their allegiance to the Z.A.R. This development was most marked in the area to the west of the Leolu in which the military threat was most pressing and the disruption of production most acute. In some cases the change of fealty was the consequence of the danger or reality of military defeat. During the course of the July campaign, not only had a number of minor chiefdoms submitted to the authority of the Z.A.R., but two key subordinate chiefdoms which had exercised a regional hegemony within the polity - those of Maserumule and Mphaphlele - had also sued for peace.[1]

A development still more sinister from the perspective of the paramountcy was the fact that the July campaign and the activities of the volunteer forces had enabled existing political cleavages within the polity to deepen and widen. A number of chiefdoms which had long chafed under Maroteng rule, including those of Masemola, Tisane and Marisani, exploited the presence of the army and the forts to effect a final breach with the paramountcy. Tseke, the Masemola chief, not only recognized the authority of the Z.A.R. but despatched his regiments to aid attacks on groups loyal to the Maroteng. Curbing these activities came to be one of the paramountcy's most pressing priorities. Indeed, one of the major set piece battles fought after the withdrawal of the Z.A.R. army was an attack led by Maroteng regiments against the Masemola at Phiring in November of 1876. This was, however, repulsed with the assistance of a contingent from Fort Weeber.[2]

---

[1] Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 254-64.

[2] B.M.B., 1877, pp. 179-80; B.M.B., 1878, pp. 405 and 422; Gold Fields Mercury, 25.11.1876; T.A., S.N.1, 110/79, Schulze to Clarke, 31.5.1877.

Not only did existing cleavages between the Maroteng paramountcy and certain subordinate chiefdoms widen, but the issue of allegiance became embroiled with conflicts within chiefdoms. The best documented example of this phenomenon and, in the long term, probably the most significant, occurred within the Masèrumule chiefdom. After the deaths of Maserumule and his designated heir Sikwane, in rapid succession, the latter's widow Lexolane, Sekhukhune's sister, and his younger brother, Pokwane, were the main competitors for power within the chiefdom. Lexolane, with Sekhukhune's support, was appointed as regent, but Pokwane used the events of 1876 to reassert his claim to chieftaincy, and enlisted the support of Captain Ferreira for his cause. Lexolane, in turn, despite the fact that she had sued for peace with the Burgers' army, was increasingly forced to rely on Sekhukhune for support while attempting to avoid falling foul of Ferreira. The evidence from this chiefdom and from others suggests that while the ruling group may have been divided over this issue of allegiance to the Maroteng, popular sentiment amongst the commoner stratum remained loyal to the paramountcy.[1] Disputes of this kind, however, also provided some scope for the Maroteng in their attempt to regain lost authority.

Thus, as 1876 drew to a close, while the Pedi polity was far from facing imminent military defeat, fissures had appeared in its fabric, and the authority of the paramountcy had been significantly weakened. Equally ominous was the spectre of widespread famine which stalked the land. Sekhukhune was confronted by the need to repair the former and to stave off the latter, and both goals required that the volunteer forces should be curbed or removed from his domain. The Z.A.R. was

---

[1] T.A., S.N.1, 110/79, Schulze to Clarke, 31.5.1877; B.M.B., 1877, pp. 179-80, 383-7.

also under mounting pressure, unable to bear the cost of continued military operations and with vocal internal disaffection and a looming threat of imperial intervention. In December of 1876 while on a visit to Fort Weeber Merensky decided to visit Sekhukhune and found little difficulty in persuading him to initiate negotiations. The messengers whom the paramount despatched to Pretoria were greeted with some relief but were told that 500 cattle should be paid as a gesture of good intent before negotiations were begun.[1]

No cattle were delivered, but on 20 January 1877, with Theophilus Shepstone, Lord Carnarvon's special commissioner, already in the Transvaal en route for Pretoria, the stipulation was ignored and the representatives of the Z.A.R. and the Pedi polity met at Botsabelo to attempt to reach a negotiated settlement. There were three main areas of contention. The subject status of the Pedi polity, the extent of its domain, and the composition and value of reparations. While these negotiations proceeded, Shepstone arrived in Pretoria. On 7 February it was announced that a treaty of peace had been concluded which stipulated that

> Sikukuni will be a subject of the state and submit to the laws of the country ... that he should pay as war expenses 2000 head of cattle ... that the Leolu Mts. and a fair portion of land to the east side shall be allotted to him and his tribe for occupation, and a piece of land on the western side of said mountain, viz from Magnet Heights as a large ridge extends in that direction as far as the town of Panama, and which ground is according to valuation about 12 miles long and 6 broad.[2]

The Z.A.R. stipulated a further condition that the forts would not be evacuated until Sekhukhune himself had signed the treaty. On 16 February, the paramount's signature was obtained, and it appeared as if Burgers had secured a favourable peace in the nick of time.

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 323-4.

[2] C.1776, No. 64, Bulwer to Carnarvon, 14.2.1877.

It rapidly transpired, however, that important differences existed between the publicized written aggreement and the terms to which the paramount had agreed. This information was supplied to Burgers and Shepstone by Merensky who had, in turn, gained it from the Botsabelo contingent who attended the discussions which preceded the signing of the treaty by Sekhukhune. It was subsequently confirmed by the investigations of a joint commission. Sekhukhune had refused to recognise himself to be a subject of the Z.A.R. He recounted that he had said:

> I will not stand under the law. I am unwilling to pay taxes. I have to live by my people and any tax payable by them should come to me as their chief.[1]

Neither does the boundary issue appear to have been resolved. Sekhukhune's interpretation of the agreement was reminiscent of some aspects of earlier Pedi claims. It included land to the south of the Steelpoort River, but even so represented a considerable contraction of the area to which the paramountcy had previously laid claim. After considerable debate at Botsabelo, the Pedi representatives agreed to pay 2000 cattle in reparation; but Sekhukhune wanted ivory, money and skins to be taken in lieu of cattle and asked for time so that he could send men to the Cape and Natal to earn money with which he could pay the fine. Despite these areas of dispute, ambiguity and downright disagreement, Ferreira nonetheless pressed Sekhukhune to sign the document, a fact which when it was revealed, destroyed the credibility of the peace.

The peace agreement was thus rapidly overtaken by events. Not only did the arrival of Shepstone on Z.A.R. soil help to panic the Burgers' administration into an act of self-defeating deception, but it also gave

---

[1] C.1776, No. 111, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 3.4.1877, and encs, in particular No. 6, Report of proceedings of a Commission sent by the President of the South African Republic to investigate the circumstances attending the signing of a Treaty of Peace dated 15 February 1877, between the Transvaal Government and the Chief Sekukuni, 28.3.1877.

the paramountcy additional opportunities for diplomatic manoeuvre. On 23 February, Shepstone received two letters which he used assiduously in his campaign to undermine the credibility of President Burgers. The first was a letter from Merensky detailing the flaws in the treaty. The second was a letter from Sekhukhune which read:

> I beg you chief come help me, the Boers are killing me and I don't know the reasons why they should be angry with me. Chief, I beg you come with Mijn Heer Merenski.[1]

By the end of February, any hope that Sekhukhune would accept the authority of the Z.A.R. without a bitter and prolonged struggle had been dispelled. Thus, when the Transvaal was annexed in April 1877, the Pedi polity remained undefeated. The authority of the paramountcy had been dented and the possibility and reality of famine continued, but the Pedi regiments remained armed, intact and firmly in possession of the great natural fortress formed by the Leolu Mountains.

---

[1] Ibid., enc. 1; see also enc. 2, Merensky to Shepstone, 21.2.1877; Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 323-8.

CHAPTER NINE

THE IMPERIAL FACTOR AND THE DESTRUCTION OF PEDI INDEPENDENCE

PART ONE: The Imperial Factor

An uneasy peace reigned through most of 1877 in the eastern Transvaal. It fractured, however, early in 1878 and war was resumed. Hostilities continued with varying intensity over two years, until they culminated in the successful storming of the Maroteng capital on 28 November 1879 by a combined army of imperial troops and Swazi warriors under the command of Sir Garnet Wolseley.

The existing explanations for these events echo those which have conventionally been advanced for the outbreak of war in 1876. The ambition of Sekhukhune and the expansionism of the paramountcy are presented as the determining factors.[1] Outside influences are, however, also invoked. Sekhukhune's attitude to the new administration is presented as having been partially shaped by the prompting he received from the Zulu king Cetshwayo, and the advice of local Boer notables, in particular that of Abel Erasmus.[2] These accounts are marred by their failure to comprehend the background to and consequences of the 1876 war. They suffer from the absence of any systematic attempt to locate the policies and actions of the paramount in the context of the processes of conflict and change at work within the polity and the region. Their most glaring omission, however, lies in their silence on the extent to which events in the Transvaal were shaped by wider imperial strategy. By the 1870s this afforded little place to independent African chiefdoms or Boer

---

1 K.W. Smith, 'The Campaigns against the Bapedi of Sekhukhune, 1877-1879', Archives Year Book, XXXII (1967), pp. 16-20, 61-2; K.W. Smith, 'The Fall of the Bapedi of the North-Eastern Transvaal', Journal of African History, X, 2(1969), pp. 243-6, 252; Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 308-14.

2 Smith, 'The Campaigns', pp. 16-20; Van Rooyen,'Verhoudinge', pp.309-10.

Republics and, once the annexation of the Transvaal had been achieved, focused on overhauling and strengthening the state inherited from the Z.A.R.

A key element in the more interventionist imperial policy pursued in southern Africa in this period was the Confederation Scheme initiated in 1875 by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon. According to this plan Natal and the Cape Colony were to be federated with the Boer Republics to form a single South African dominion. The principal exponent of this policy in South Africa was the new High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, appointed in 1877 to supervise confederation as a fitting conclusion to a distinguished career in the colonial service. Frere's view was that the proposed dominion must be built on the basis of European self-government and the subjugation and 'civilization' of the African population of the region.[1]

Historians have had some difficulty in establishing the motives behind the scheme. Robinson and Gallagher suggest that the policy pursued by Carnarvon and his associates was not the product of any purely commercial necessity, but was the result of the need to 'uphold a traditional paramountcy for the old strategic reasons', namely the importance to the Empire of the Cape sea route.[2] Goodfellow, in a major study, also stresses the importance attached to erecting, 'from the chaos of the sub-continent a strongly self governing and above all loyal dominion behind the essential bastion of Simons Bay'. He nonetheless shows that the Confederation Scheme was too ambitious to be explained

---

1 C.F. Goodfellow, Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870-1881, (Cape Town, 1966), p. 154.

2 R. Robinson and J. Gallagher with A. Denny, Africa and the Victorians, The Official Mind of Imperialism (London, 1961)pp. 60-61.

in terms of Robinson and Gallagher's reactive theory of British expansion. However, his alternative explanation is based on the unconvincing proposition that 'the policy of 1874-8, and therefore its consequences, ... were essentially the products of the personal preoccupations of one man, Lord Carnarvon'.[1]

More recent attempts to account for British South African expansion into the interior have suggested that, looked at from the South African end rather than from London, the crucial factors pushing in this direction were socio-economic - that whatever Carnarvon's notions of security and imperial defence, his schemes achieved the impact that they did because they coincided with the dominant trends of local development.[2] The policy of confederation is thus placed firmly in the context of the transformation of the South African economy set in motion by the discovery of diamonds in 1868 along the Vaal-Hartz River. This economic windfall stimulated the inflow of capital and the development of infrastructure, particularly railways. It provided an export commodity which dwarfed the value of previous exports, quickened the pace of commercial activity in the colonies and created new markets for pastoral and agricultural produce. These developments both stimulated and integrated a regional economy and part of the argument for confederation emphasized the essentially unitary nature of the developing southern African economy.[3]

Probably the most significant factor in its implications for the future of the Z.A.R. and the Pedi polity, was that production on the diamond fields and the railway construction in the Cape were crucially

---

1 Goodfellow, Confederation, pp. 70 and 216.

2 Atmore and Marks, Imperial Factor, p. 124.

3 Ibid., pp. 121-7; J. Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom (London, 1979), pp. 44-5; N. Etherington, 'Labour Supply and the Genesis of South African Confederation in the 1870s', Journal of African History, XX, 3 (1979), p. 253.

dependent on a flow of migrant labour from north of the Vaal. The legislation enacted in the Z.A.R. in the 1870s, which sought to control, direct and tax African labour, was seen from the vantage of the diamond fields as a serious threat to future development. This view was strengthened by the attacks on migrants travelling to and from the fields and the suspicion and hostility encountered by labour recruiters in the Transvaal. Robert Southey, Lieutenant Governor of Griqualand-West, and an increasingly strident annexationist, repeatedly drew the attention of the Colonial Office to the impediment presented by the Z.A.R. to the free flow of labour to the fields.[1] It has thus been argued that the centrality of the need for a uniform native policy to the pro-confederationist case was shaped by the need to maintain, and encourage, a regional system of labour supply.[2]

The core of Carnarvon's argument for confederation, however, was that

> As long as natives perceive that the comparatively small European population of South Africa is divided under a number of European governments [which] ... are ... estranged, they must continue restless and unsettled. The result is a ... distinct danger of widely extended disaffection.[3]

But this fear also needs to be placed in the context of the processes of socio-economic change at work in the 1870s. As has been suggested in the account of the background to the war between the Pedi polity and the Z.A.R. in 1876, the intensification of struggles over land, labour and markets, which heightened the fear of African resistance and revolt was, in part, the consequence of the impact on the region of the development of the diamond and gold fields.[4] These conflicts also provided one of the reasons for imperial intervention.

---

[1] C.1748, No. 1, Southey to Barkly, 16.1.1875 end encs.; see also ch. 6, part 3.

[2] Etherington, 'Labour Supply', pp. 239-45.

[3] C.1244, No. 1, Carnarvon to Barkly, 4.5.1875.

[4] See ch. 8, Introduction and part 1; see also Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, p. 58.

Carnarvon's role remains to be adequately accounted for, but Etherington has pointed to the key part played by Natal interests, and that colony's 'most dedicated expansionist', Theophilus Shepstone, in the formulation and implementation of the confederation policy. Etherington disputes the conventional treatment of the white population of Natal as an undifferentiated master class, pointing to the existence of an economic and social elite consisting mainly of coastal sugar planters. These planters who were dependent on labour migrants from beyond the borders of the colony, and importers of trading goods who relied on the growing interior trade, were the natural allies of imperialist expansion. Shepstone had close connections with this group which were cemented by his ability to ensure their labour supply.[1]

As Natal's labour reservoir expanded northwards Shepstone came to believe that the restructuring of African society was inevitable. He had long believed that circumstances would always 'force the civilised man, when he inhabits the same country with the savage, to encroach upon the unoccupied lands claimed by the latter'.[2] His abiding fear was that a general anti-European combination of independent African rulers might prevent the peaceful extension of imperial rule. Shepstone was further convinced that expansion could be made to pay for itself. In Natal, the revenue derived from Africans supported most of the cost of administration; a situation in marked contrast to that which pertained in the Transvaal. Shepstone also believed that his administrative procedures would easily govern 'any class, country or nation' of Africans south of the Zambezi, and he actively sought an opportunity to prove his theory, plotting to partition Zululand and mulling over schemes to ingest Lesotho.[3] His

---

1 Etherington, 'Labour Supply', pp. 236-8.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

imagination focused particularly on a disputed piece of territory between the Transvaal and Zululand which he looked upon as the goldem bridge to African empire; a corridor which would carry black labour to Natal and export British imperialism into the interior.[1]

The developments of the 1870s encouraged an even more aggressive expansionism on the part of Natalians. The Shepstone family along with other colonists were involved in the exploitation of diamonds in Griqualand-West and gold in the eastern Transvaal. Natal-based interests were also deeply concerned with supplying the new markets created - and contributed to the quickening pace of land speculation in - the interior.[2] Probably the most far-reaching effects of the new mineral discoveries on the colony, however, was the diversion of part of its labour supply to the diamond fields. Attempts to remedy this situation focused the colonists' attention on the importance of the supply of labour from areas to the north and the obstacle to the free movement of this labour constituted by the Z.A.R., the Zulu kingdom and the Portuguese administration. Etherington has argued that Shepstone's advice played a key role in shaping Carnarvon's thinking from 1874 onwards.[3] It was thus appropriate that Shepstone should have been entrusted with the delicate task of bringing the Transvaal under British rule. Even more fitting was that he should remain there as administrator. He was thus able to apply his theory of cheap government through black chiefs, black taxes and black police to the Transvaal. The symmetry of his ideas was, however, to suffer severely from exposure to the complex realities of the Transvaal.

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., pp. 239-40.

[3] Ibid., p. 247.

Shepstone's commission from Carnarvon had stressed the need for obtaining popular consent for the annexation and he had entertained the hope that Burgers could be persuaded to request imperial intervention. In the event, while the proclamation of annexation on 12 April 1877 met with no open resistance, neither Burgers nor the Volksraad had abandoned their objections and there had been no effective test of popular opinion. One of the last acts of the Uitvoerende Raad was to despatch S.J.P. Kruger and E.P.J. Jorrisen to England to register protest. Carnarvon, poorly advised by Shepstone on the state of public opinion amongst the Transvaalers declined to discuss the deputation's request for a referendum on the annexation. From early in 1878, Kruger and P.J. Joubert began to marshal opposition to British rule. By March of that year Shepstone was persuaded that he 'dare not rely upon the Boers in their present temper for anything except opposition'.[1] During 1879, the relations between ruler and burgher deteriorated still further. Shepstone was succeeded as Administrator by Sir Owen Lanyon in 1879 under whom the government of the Transvaal became, in de Kiewiet's phrase, a 'timorous despotism' remote from its subjects, obsessed with economy and dependent on small military garrisons stationed in the main towns.[2] The following years were to see the embers of resistance fanned into the flame of open revolt.

The most acute difficulties facing the administration in 1877, however, did not stem from burgher disaffection, but from the frailty of the state's authority over significant areas of the Transvaal and the chaotic condition of its finances. The weaknesses and liabilities of the old government became the legacy and urgent needs of the new. Shepstone's first priority was to repair and, to some extent, reshape the state he had captured. Its most pressing requirement was for

---

[1] N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Bartle Frere, 12.3.1878.

[2] de Kiewiet, Imperial Factor, p. 145.

revenue. Securing this revenue was central to the policies pursued by both Shepstone and his successor Sir Owen Lanyon. The means adopted to do so also played a vital role in alienating both African and burgher sympathies from their administrations.[1]

Carnarvon, when he wrote to his special commissioner to congratulate him on the annexation, spelt out the principal constraints within which the Transvaal would have to be ruled:

> I know that you must somehow have the means to pay your way and to carry on Govt. effectively, and no economy would be so unwise as one which would involve a real risk of misrule and of fresh disorder; but I need not remind you how very desirable it is not to come upon Imperial assistance in point of money more than is necessary. Your object must be to bear in mind these two opposite considerations - effective government and economy.[2]

The only financial aid provided by the imperial government was a grant of £100,000 which Shepstone rapidly disbursed to persons who had claims against the state. He was thereafter dependent on internal sources of revenue and the state's ability to raise loans.[3]

Shepstone, while confiding to Carnarvon that, 'The finance question is the one that presses me most, and .., is the one in regard to which I can afford no delay', believed that the methods of native administration which he had developed in Natal could provide one solution to the problems facing the new colony. In particular, he believed that there was a 'large income to be derived from the judicious taxation of the Native population' and that therefore although he was mindful of the twin needs of effective government and economy 'in the case of the Transvaal effective government is economy'.[4]

---

1 Ibid.

2 N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 20, Carnarvon to Shepstone, 30.5.1877.

3 Thompson, 'Afrikaaner Republics', Wilson and Thompson (eds.) Oxford History, II, p. 298.

4 P.R.O., Carnarvon Papers, 30/6/23, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 23.7.1877 (emphasis added).

The 'judicious' collection of taxes, however, required an effective system of administration and one which fell under centralized control. In June of 1877 Shepstone outlined his plans. He argued that the Transvaal was too large to manage as Natal was managed: by direct communication from each magistrate - as administrator of native law - to the Secretary of Native Affairs. Therefore, he proposed that four or five commissionerships should be established over districts containing several magistrates. The magistrates would, as a rule, report to and receive orders from, the commissioners. The latter would communicate with a newly-established Department of Native Affairs. Initially, Captain H. Clarke, R.A., and Sir Morrison Barlow, Natal magistrates who had been seconded to Shepstone, were appointed as commissioners for the Lydenburg and Zoutpansberg districts respectively. Theophilus Shepstone's son, Henrique, was appointed as Secretary of Native Affairs.[1] In reality, a new system of native administration was not brought into being; rather the old patterns of control were co-opted and given more centralized leadership.

Once Shepstone had established the rudiments of his planned system of administration, he attempted to set it to work. He issued instructions to the commissioners to

> ... desire the native chiefs and people to prepare for the payment of hut tax this winter, at the rate of 10 shillings a hut ... and that it is necessary that the tax should be paid in money rather than in kind.

Taxation was not, of course, only about raising revenue for the Transvaal State. The wider imperatives which shaped the annexation were reflected in the second part of the instructions which stipulated that chiefs should be informed that

> ... in order to enable their people to go to work for wages either in this country or elsewhere, payment for passes on their way to seek labour will be abolished, and arrangements made for their safe journey back to their homes.[2]

---

[1] N.A., A, 96, Shepstone Coll. 67, Shepstone to Clarke, 10.6.1877.

[2] CO 879/12/42, No. 53, Shepstone to Barlow, 21.6.1877.

Taxation, and particularly taxation in money, combined the virtues of supplying revenue and encouraging migrant labour.

Not only was the state in urgent need of revenue, but its claim to large areas of territory was also under serious challenge. The rejection of the Z.A.R.'s attempts to collect taxes and enforce labour service had evoked an even more fundamental rejection of the state's legitimacy, based on the denial of its right to the land. The 1870s had also witnessed increased encroachment by settlers on lands claimed by African polities, and the reverse process had also occurred. Thus Shepstone reported from the eastern Transvaal in October 1877 on the festering conflicts which scarred that region,

> In almost every case the question is one of land arising out of arrangements more or less incomplete regarding boundaries and grants of farms to white men by the government of the late Republic ... The Boer view of these questions has been aquiesced in by the natives up to the last few years and their right to their farms had not been questioned by the natives, but as the government grew weaker, they gradually came to think more and more lightly of the Boer rights, until the fiasco with Sekhukhune made the natives look with contempt upon the white man, and induced them to disregard in many instances their rights altogether.[1]

The new administration did not flinch from enforcing claims to land which had been advanced by the Z.A.R. and rights to land established under Republican rule. It was, however, aware of their dubious basis in some instances. This attitude, while it played a part in provoking conflict with the Pedi polity, had its most important impact on relations with the Zulu kingdom. Shepstone, who had previously supported Zulu land claims in order to bring pressure to bear on the Z.A.R., rapidly reversed his position once the Transvaal was annexed. The conventional explanation for this volte face is that Shepstone was intent on winning the support of the burgher population.[2] While this was no doubt a factor influencing

---

[1] N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Herbert, 5.10.1877.

[2] L. Thompson, 'The Subjection of the African Chiefdoms, 1870-1898', Wilson and Thompson (eds.) Oxford History, II, p. 263.

his thinking, his endorsement of Z.A.R. claims came before burgher disaffection had grown acute. Probably as important was that enforcing the state's right to the land was a key step in re-establishing its authority and ensuring its revenue. The area in dispute was also one which had been crucial to Shepstone's vision of a corridor carrying British imperialism into the interior, and labour south to Natal.

Beyond these considerations, however, lay the fact that a wider set of rights to property which had been sanctioned by the Z.A.R. was under challenge throughout the northern and eastern Transvaal. These land rights provided one of the bases for the development of capitalist relations of production and facilitated the accumulation of farms by Transvaal-based individuals and companies, and those operating from the Cape, Natal and Britain. To allow the shaky foundations of this pattern of property holding to be exposed, or to crumble, threatened not only to undermine the authority of the state but also to prejudice a still wider set of imperial and colonial interests. The attempts of colonial officials to construct arguments to justify their position led them into tortuous, if revealing, formulations. Bartle Frere, for example, commented in relation to the border dispute with the Zulu,

> The Boers had force of their own and every right of conquest; but they had also what they seriously believed to be a higher title, in the old commands they found in parts of their Bible to exterminate the Gentiles, and take their land in possession. We may freely admit that they misinterpreted the text, and were utterly mistaken in its application. But they had at least a sincere belief in the Divine authority for what they did, and therefore a far higher title than the Zulu could claim for all they acquired.[1]

Imperial intervention in the Transvaal entrenched the system of property established under the Z.A.R., rescuing it from serious challenge. As de Kiewiet has pointed out, for land owners and speculators

---

[1] Quoted in Guy, Zulu Kingdom, p. 48.

> British annexation was a welcome event ... Through the annexation many a worthless title deed was elevated to the status of a negotiable certificate of possession; many farms were occupied for the first time, and the frontier commenced again to march against the weakening resistance of independent native settlement.[1]

It was not only the land claims of African societies but also the continuing independence of African polities which fell victim to the climate of economic transformation and imperial expansion which prevailed in the 1870s. Independent chiefdoms were seen through Bartle Frere's eyes as an 'anachronism' and Shepstone's expansionist zeal, which had previously been kept in check, was given fuller play.[2] A recurring refrain in Shepstone's writings thoughout 1877 was that decisive action was required to restore the position of the 'white man' in South Africa. He argued that this had been permanently damaged by the Z.A.R.'s failure to defeat Sekhukhune which 'disclosed for the first time to the native powers outside the Republic, from the Zambezi to the Cape, the great change which had taken place in the relative strength of the white and black races'. This development in Shepstone's account placed every 'European community in peril and imposed the duty upon those who have the power to shield enfeebled civilization from the encroachments of barbarism and inhumanity.[3]

Although the 1876 war was a key turning point in Shepstone's portrayal of the changing relations of power, he held the view that the continued independence and influence of the Zulu kingdom constituted the most serious threat to colonial society. As 1877 progressed and the border dispute deepened, Shepstone urged that war with the Zulu was both necessary and inevitable. In his depiction Cetshwayo was

---

[1] de Kiewiet, Imperial Factor, p. 187.

[2] Atmore and Marks, 'Imperial Factor', p. 122.

[3] CO 879/14/164, Memo. on the Zulu question, T. Shepstone, n.d. 1878.

> ... the secret hope of every petty independent chief hundreds of miles away from him who feels a desire that his colour should prevail and it will not be until this hope is destroyed that they will make up their minds to submit to the rule of civilization.[1]

Shepstone's fears of a general anti-European combination of African polities also revived and he was convinced that the Zulu king would be the prime mover in the welding of such an alliance and in fomenting open resistance. In Shepstone's mind, the Pedi polity was of secondary importance in the region. One of his principal errors lay in his belief that it therefore would be a relatively simple matter to bring it under the control of the Transvaal state.

---

[1] N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 11.12.1877.

PART TWO

War Resumed

At the time when the annexation of the Transvaal was proclaimed, the war between the Pedi polity and the Z.A.R. was in a state of stalemate and the February treaty had been discredited. The new administrator, nonetheless, made no bones of his belief that the Pedi polity should fall under the control of the new government. Pedi emissaries were in Pretoria on 12 April when the proclamation was issued. Most returned to inform the paramount of the change of government. Shepstone, however, kept Sekhukhune's chief messenger at the capital until the arrival of British troops with the objective of convincing him by 'ocular demonstration that, with the change of government had also come a considerable accession of physical strength'.[1]

The next step Shepstone took was to deliver what amounted to an ultimatum to the paramount. A message, translated into Sepedi by Nachtigal, was sent to Sekhukhune informing him that,

> ... all persons, natives and especially their chiefs, as well as whites, residing within this territory who wish to continue their residence therein as subjects of the great Queen, and enjoy her protection and also other benefits appertaining to such privilege would be obliged to render due obedience to the Government and to pay such tax as may be found necessary for protection and to enable his Excellency to provide for the necessary expenditure contingent on the good government of the country.

Sekhukhune was given the option of remaining as such a subject, or leaving the territory. It was also stipulated that he should pay the war indemnity of 2000 cattle which he had undertaken to deliver to the Z.A.R. without delay.[2]

---

[1] C.1883, No. 22, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 13.6.1877.

[2] Ibid., enc. 1, Osborn to Sekhukhune, 9.5.1877.

This beginning boded ill for future relations. Shepstone was aware that the Pedi remained undefeated, and that, as a Colonial official was later to minute 'the British Government strongly denied the right of the Republic to sovereignty over Sikukuni in 1876-77 ... Our title to sovereignty as heirs to the Republic is therefore pretty weak, and has been discredited by ourselves'.[1] The new administration was nonetheless prepared to ride roughshod over Pedi claims to independence.

The reasons for this have been alluded to above. The Pedi polity had come to represent the major alternative focus of power and authority to the Z.A.R. Its independence and strength remained a key obstacle to the collection of taxes throughout the northern and eastern Transvaal. The land claims made by the paramount could be used to challenge established patterns of property and the area in contention included resources, notably gold, deemed vital to the colony's future.[2] The threat of external intervention and the unsympathetic scrutiny of the state's claims to land and population, which had haunted the Burgers' administration, was no longer a major danger to the new government. But the continued independence of the Pedi polity was not easily reconciled with Shepstone's plans to restore the authority and liquidity of the state. Neither did it fit in with plans for imperial expansion and consolidation or with Shepstone's belief that the balance of power had to be rectified.

Also important to the attitude which Shepstone struck was a serious miscalculation of the power of the polity. He appears to have believed that the reverses suffered by the Republican forces were almost wholly the consequences of the weaknesses of the state and dismissed the Pedi as 'a Makatee or Basuto tribe, unwarlike, and of no account in Zulu estimation'.[3] Given Shepstone's opinion that the Zulu kingdom would

---

1 CO 291/3/17514, Minute by Fairfield, 8.11.1879

2 Ch. 6, part 3; ch.8, part 2; C.2482, No. 35, Wolseley to Hicks-Beach, 20.7.1879 and encs.

3 CO 879/14/164, Memo. on the Zulu question, T. Shepstone, n.d. 1878.

rapidly collapse in combat with a disciplined army it is not surprising that he should have held such a low opinion of Pedi military strength.[1] In both the Zulu and the Pedi case; however, his military projections proved to be based on a profound misreading of the situation.

It probably appeared singularly ominous to the Maroteng that Shepstone, who had apparently been sympathetic to their cause, should have adopted with such rapidity the claims of a state whose independence he had so recently extinguished. Faced with the stark choice between subjection, migration or, implicitly, the resumption of war, the paramountcy had little option but to accept the conditions imposed. They nonetheless attempted to moderate the extent of actual demands made and sought, to establish a diplomatic rather than a subject relationship with the new administration.[2] It is clear that neither the rulers nor the bulk of the subjects of the polity were, as yet, prepared to abandon the remnants of their independence.

The question of the payment of the war indemnity of 2000 cattle rapidly became the key bone of contention. The new administration saw its delivery, or otherwise, as a vital test and symbol of the extent to which their authority had been made effective. Early in June, Sekhukhune requested an additional eleven days in which to gather the cattle, claiming that some of the beasts which his subjects wished to offer were too small.[3] On the day appointed for the delivery of the indemnity, 200 cattle were brought to Clarke at Lydenburg with a message that more time was needed. Clarke's response was that he would accept them as a first instalment. A month later on 16 July, Sekhukhune's representatives

---

[1] N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 11.12.1877.

[2] C. 1883, No. 22, enc. 2, Clarke to Shepstone, 13.6.1877.

[3] Ibid.

returned bringing with them forty head of cattle, four large tusks and a number of small tusks of ivory, some goats and a sum of money. Clarke refused the ivory, goats and money on the assumption that the paramount was attempting to evade his responsibilities and flout the authority of the state.[1]

The paramount's principal messenger, alarmed by Clarke's curt response, begged that the matter be referred to Shepstone:

> ... stating that he feared to take my [Clarke's] message to Sekukune. The chief's [Sekhukhune's] message to me is that he looks upon me as his patron, that whatever I say he will do, that his people are hungry and that he requires all the cattle that he can spare to buy corn. He hopes that I won't be hard but will give him some more time. That he cannot understand why the English who have taken the land should enforce a penalty exacted by the Boers.[2]

Shepstone and Clarke, partly on the advice of Nachtigal, chose to discount distress within the Pedi domain as a crucial factor shaping the paramount's response and focused instead on the protest contained in the last sentence quote above. This in Shepstone's opinion meant that

> ... the only course open to Capt. Clarke is to decline, as he has declined, to take anything but the cattle which Sikukuni engaged to pay and to inform Sikukuni that the government intends to adhere to this resolution.[3]

Shepstone also appears to have been clear in his own mind of the likely result of the course he was now charting. In his view, this response would give the government time to prepare for 'any eventuality which might arise'. Central to these preparations was the recruitment of a 'Zulu police force in Natal to be placed under Clarke's command'.[4]

In early September, Shepstone visited Lydenburg en route to Utrecht and had an interview with a number of representatives of the paramountcy.

---

[1] T.A., S.S. 241, R.2744/77, Clarke to Shepstone, 18.7.1877.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., minute Shepstone, 27.7.1877.

[4] Ibid.

Unfortunately, no independent record exists of this meeting and historians are largely dependent on Shepstone's account of events.[1] Although the messages he received from Sekhukhune were 'all that can be wished for'[2] Shepstone was growing increasingly suspicious of Maroteng professions, and his initial optimism over the ease with which the polity could be brought under control had been undermined. By October his view was that

> ... Sikukuni is and always has been so far away from all white influences and knows so little of the difference between the British government and that of the Republic, is so puffed up with his success against the Boers and has such an exaggerated opinion of the strength and prowess of the Zulus whom he thinks stronger than the English, and besides labours under the disadvantage of being a fool, the greatest of all disadvantages to both him and us, that it would be unreasonable to expect him all at once to descend from his lofty position and to cheerfully accommodate himself to his circumstances.[3]

The influence of Shepstone's own world view in shaping his understanding of Sekhukhune's is plain to see.

Shepstone was, nonetheless, determined to extract a decisive token of Pedi subjection which would serve to symbolise and proclaim his administration's authority and power over the African population of the Transvaal. In September he handed back all the cattle that Clarke had previously accepted and demanded payment in full. He told the Maroteng messengers that in a tribe as large as theirs there could be no difficulty in gathering together 2000 head of cattle and informed them that if they did not wish to be British subjects they could leave the country once the indemnity had been paid.[4] Shepstone did not, however, specify a date by which the cattle had to be delivered. It is probable that Shepstone's belief that Sekhukhune's attitude stemmed from his assessment of the relative strength of the Zulu kingdom led him to anticipate that a

---

[1] This is generally true for the record of the negotiations between the Pedi polity and the Transvaal government, and Shepstone's view and explanation of these events has been largely uncritically accepted by historians. See, for example, Smith, 'The Campaigns', pp. 10-16.

[2] N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Bartle Frere, 12.9.1877.

[3] Ibid., Shepstone to Herbert, 5.10.1877.

[4] Ibid.; C.2144, No. 27, Shepstone to Hicks Beach, 16.4.1878.

demonstration of imperial power in relation to the Zulu over the boundary question would bring Sekhukhune to his senses. This view may have been at the root of his somewhat mystical comment in early October that

> ... a little time will produce a good effect on him as upon all the other native tribes and that we may safely rely upon the good effect being produced by the influence that is now gradually growing and that soon will be overwhelming in the atmosphere of the Transvaal. I mean that the prestige of the British government and its reputation for strength and justice will in themselves accomplish in a little time and more effectively what even force just now would scarcely bring about.[1]

However, whatever Shepstone's expectations might have been, Sekhukhune's emissaries clearly interpreted his words and actions as an ultimatum balancing payment of the cattle against the resumption of war.[2]

Shepstone's blinkered view of events ensured that he failed to appreciate the processes at work within the polity. Despite his scepticism there is evidence which suggests that the distress within the Pedi domain was real. As has been described previously, the events and drought of 1876 had seriously disrupted production, had resulted in heavy losses of cattle and had ensured a poor harvest in 1877.[3] The drought barely relented in 1877 and missionaries, other than Nachtigal, reported a widespread shortage of grain by the middle of the year. In May, Otto Posselt - based at Phatametsane - noted in his diary that famine threatened at the Maroteng capital, and in July Merensky wrote to the government Secretary that 'Hunger is already very severe amongst the tribe of Sekukune, I fear that as the season advances it will become almost intolerable'.[4] In October of 1877, a party of visitors from the gold fields en route to Tsate reported that they were unable to procure maize or beer on account of the shortages.[5] From this time onwards there is mounting

---

1 N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll, 68, Shepstone to Herbert, 5.10.1877.

2 B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 17.9.1877.

3 See ch. 8, part 3.

4 B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 11.5.1877; T.A., S.N. 5, Merensky to Osborn, 25.7.1877.

5 Gold Fields Mercury, 25.10.1877.

evidence of growing Pedi dependence on imported grain. Botsabelo was one important source of supply in 1877, but even more important was the trade with societies to the north of the Oliphants River which began in 1876 and continued until the final defeat of the polity in 1879. The key link in this supply was provided by the Mphaphlele chiefdom which procured grain from societies situated in the more fertile regions of the Zoutpansberg. By November of 1878, Barlow reported that Sekhukhune was exchanging cattle for grain 'at the high rate of a heifer for every 300 lbs. of grain'.[1] Sekhukhune's protest, therefore, that he needed all the cattle that he could spare to buy grain was probably rather better founded than Shepstone or Clarke chose to believe.

Shepstone was, nonetheless, almost certainly correct in his assertion that there were sufficient cattle left within the Pedi domain to pay the fine. What he singularly failed to appreciate, however, was the costs that this would have entailed for the position of the paramountcy in the economic and political context of 1877. A key omission from the calculations of Shepstone and Clarke (and one reproduced by most of the historians who have examined the evidence) was any consideration of the pressures operating on Sekhukhune from within the polity and the extent to which these moulded his response to their demands. It is probably above all because this vital context has been ignored or misunderstood that existing accounts fall back on explanations for events couched in terms of the personal obduracy or ambition of Sekhukhune.

By the end of 1876, the authority of the paramountcy had been dented, and Sekhukhune's hold on office had also been weakened. Merensky reported that in 1877 Sekhukhune experienced some difficulty in controlling his sons. Some slaughtered cattle from the royal herd without his permission, and Sekhukhune was forced to execute another who had plotted against him,[2]

---

1 T.A., LL 4, Statement of Andries Balushi before Landdros, 8.8.1878 and C.2222, No. 8, Barlow to Shepstone, 27.10.1878.

2 Merensky, Erinnerungen, p. 332.

Unfortunately, there is no material available to elaborate on the nature of these conflicts, but they suggest that a number of the paramount's sons were staking out their claims to the succession and attempting to increase the extent of their own power within the polity. Equally, a number of subordinate chiefdoms had asserted their independence and the loyalty of others was in doubt.[1] Sekhukhune's most pressing priority in 1877 was thus to repair the damage done to his position and to avoid any further erosion of his, and his office's authority. The remnants of the royal herds were a crucial resource in his struggle to re-establish his power. They enabled him to loan cattle to his subjects and, as importantly in this period, to provide grain and milk to those loyal and in need. While the precise extent of the royal herds remains unclear, it is likely that the subtraction of 2000 head would have severely depleted if not exhausted them. In any case, Sekhukhune could ill afford to forfeit a substantial portion of a vital prop to his position. If the indemnity was to be paid it would thus have to be raised by means of a cattle levy on the population under Maroteng sway. This course, however, entailed the risk that further popular support would be alientated and additional scope would be given to those intent on challenging Sekhukhune's and/or Maroteng power. Against this background, the motives behind Sekhukhune's attempts to pay by instalment and to substitute cash, ivory and small stock, which could be paid from his personal resources, became somewhat clearer.

Shepstone's actions in returning the two instalments paid, and demanding payment in cattle and in full, closed off these options and carried the threat of war. The missionary reports of the repercussions of the September meeting within the polity show clearly the extent to which Sekhukhune was the captive rather than the master of the internal political process. Sekhukhune's initial response to Shepstone's apparent

---

[1] See ch. 8, part 3.

ultimatum was to call a pitso at the capital to discuss what the appropriate response would be. At the meeting, he urged that the cattle should be gathered and stated that 'all would have to pay, even widows'.[1] His most influential advisors, however, argued strongly against this course of action, and on 17 October Posselt noted in his diary that Sekhukhune had abandoned his attempts to collect the cattle in the face of his subjects' reluctance to pay.[2] A weakened paramount was in no position to impose a cattle levy which ran against popular opinion. There is, nonetheless, some evidence that Sekhukhune had not abandoned all plan of paying the indemnity.[3]

Shepstone, having thus nurtured the seeds of discord in the north-eastern Transvaal, departed for Utrecht with the intention of achieving a salutary demonstration of his personal authority and the effect of imperial power in his negotiations with the Zulu kingdom. Instead, to his chagrin, he found Zulu negotiators incredulous at his changed attitude, and obdurate in their refusal to abandon their territorial claims.[4] In late October, while Shepstone believed that it was impossible to concede the Zulu case, he was, nonetheless, forced to admit that 'they have much that is unanswerable in their arguments on some points'.[5] These qualms had escaped Shepstone's mind by late November, and from this point onwards he argued that the Natal government had been thoroughly misled by the Zulu, and that the Z.A.R. land claims had been entirely legimitate.[6] By early December he was convinced that

> ... incongruous, perhaps antagonistic, elements are daily approaching each other and that they must sooner or later produce the inevitable result ... so that the sooner the root of all evil, which I consider to be Zulu power and military organisation is dealt with the easier our task will be.[7]

---

1 B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 17.9.1877.

2 Ibid., 13.10.1877, and 17.10. 1877.

3 Gold Fields Mercury, 25.10.1877.

4 Guy, Zulu Kingdom, pp. 46-7.

5 N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Herbert, 28.10.1878.

6 Ibid., Shepstone to Bulwer, 26.11.1877.

7 Ibid., Shepstone to Carnaryon, 11.12.1877 (emphasis added).

Shepstone also began to posit the existence of a rather more active relationship between the Zulu and the Pedi than he had thitherto portrayed. He suggested in the same despatch that

> ... Sikukuni is not at all in a satisfactory condition; he has not and I am afraid will not without trouble pay what he has over and over bound himself to pay; this arises from the encouragement which he gets from Cetywayo who is anxious to avoid Sikukuni's falling peacefully under the rule of the Transvaal government.[1]

Two weeks later, Shepstone reported to Carnarvon that Cetshwayo had sent £2000 in gold to the Pedi paramount in the previous month to persuade him to field forces against the colonial government.[2]

Doubtless Sekhukhune and his advisors observed the growing rift between the Zulu kingdom and the Transvaal administration with considerable interest. The evidence suggests, however, that through most of 1877 and 1878 the most pressing priority of the paramountcy was to restore its authority over its former subjects and domain. During 1877 clashes continued between groups loyal to the Maroteng and those who had taken advantage of the events of 1876 to renounce their allegiance to the paramountcy and, in some instances, had played an active part in the campaign against it. The Masemola, Tisane and Marisana chiefdoms were the most prominent in the latter group and their continued freedom from Maroteng control threatened to further undermine the paramountcy's authority over the area to the west of the Leolu Mountains.[3] The acceptance of the right to independence of these groups by the Z,A,R, and then by Shepstone's administration, also served to entrench a reduced definition of the sphere of Maroteng power. In the course of 1877, Sekhukhune adopted a blend of threat and promise to attempt to persuade them to recognise his rule. Late in 1877, however, confronted by the continued opposition of

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] C.2079, No. 3, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 25.12.1877. There appears to have been no plausible evidence for this assertion.

[3] See ch. 8, part 3.

these chiefdoms, he decided that more direct measures were called for.[1] This decision was facilitated by the fact that Shepstone had disbanded the volunteer forces earlier in the year and the 'Zulu' police force he had intended to construct remained in its infancy.[2] There also appears to have been an easing of the food shortages in the Pedi heartland from December onwards as new crops ripened.[3] Equally, Shepstone's difficulties with the Zulu and the consequent deployment of the bulk of the imperial forces in the Transvaal south-east of the escarpment may have played a part in persuading Sekhukhune that the appropriate moment had arrived for a more decisive demonstration of his power.

A key locus of the struggle for control over the land and population to the west of the Leolu Mountains fell within the Maserumule chiefdom.[4] In the decade which had preceded the 1876 war this had been amongst the most powerful of the chiefdoms subordinate to the Maroteng paramountcy and it had exercised a regional hegemony within the polity. Loss of control of this chiefdom would have constituted a serious set-back to the paramountcy's attempts to re-establish its authority. By 1877 the chiefdom was divided between the supporters of Lexolane, the sister of the paramount, who with his backing had been appointed regent for her son, and those of Pokwane, the deceased chief's younger brother. The latter relied heavily on the support of the volunteer forces and, once they had been disbanded, on the assistance and protection of Captain Clarke. In April of 1877, the dispute between the two factions had become so acute that Pokwane and his supporters removed to an adjoining site. This separation did not however end the conflict, and a pattern of

---

1 T.A., S.S. 258, R.4465/77, Schultze to Clarke, 22.12.1877.

2 C.2079, No. 1, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 24.1.1878.

3 T.A., S.S. 258, R.4654/77, Aylward to Roth, 31.12.1877.

4 See ch. 8, part 3, and B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 28.2.1877 - 3.12.1877.

raiding and counter-raiding developed. Finally, on 8 February, a regiment despatched by Sekhukhune assisted the forces of Lexolane in an attack on Pokwane's village.[1]

Pokwane, besieged by this joint force, despatched messengers to Clarke to beg for ammunition and assistance. Clarke's response was to raise a force of special police, partly on the gold fields, to be stationed at Fort Weeber. This contingent under the command of Commissioner Schultz, arrived at the scene of the fighting on 17 February, at which point the attacking forces withdrew. Clarke, following Shepstone's advice, also sought the assistance of the Ndzundza Ndebele and Masemola chiefdoms. On 24 February, he arrived at Fort Weeber and set about imposing his authority on the disputants. The justice which he dispensed was far from entirely even-handed. On 26 February, he encountered a group of twelve of Lexolane's followers and disarmed them, but did nothing the following day when Pokwane's supporters raided Lexolane's fields. The next day Clarke summoned the chieftainess to a meeting which she, plainly alarmed at his intentions, failed to attend. Instead, Clarke visited her and informed her that as she had allied herself with Sekhukhune, she could no longer remain as chieftainess. No doubt to her considerable surprise he told her that 'she being a strange woman coming from another tribe was only guardian to her son on sufferance and that her position was one quite unsupported by native usage and custom'.[2] Clarke further insisted that she should leave the village, that the regency should be vested in three headmen' and that 'the tribe' should pay fifty head of cattle to the government for breaching the peace of the district. Failure to comply with these demands would lead to the village being attacked. Lexolane made a

---

[1] Ibid., 11,2,1878.

[2] T.A., S.S. 269, R.739/78, Clarke to Osborne, 2,3,1878.

number of attempts to re-open negotiations but Clarke repulsed her overtures. For the moment the matter hung fire while Clarke awaited re-inforcements from Masemola and Marisana.[1]

Clarke's demands not only required that Lexolane should consign herself to exile but they also placed Sekhukhune in an untenable position. To allow his sister and client to be displaced, partly at the prompting of Pokwane and with the connivance of what he held to be rebel chiefdoms, would render a mortal blow to his power in that region. Yet any attempt to support Lexolane or punish Pokwane ran the risk of a head-on military collision with Clarke's forces, with equally grave political consequences. Above all, however, he could not stand passively by while Lexolane was attacked. On 2 March the paramount's emissaries arrived at Lydenburg bearing a message which attempted to resolve this conundrum. It ran

> Pogwani, Pashella and Magali's people are stealing his, Sikukuni's corn, and although they have made peace with the white people, are still living on his ground. Sikukuni also sends a message that his intention is to send a commando and kill them, and drive them off his land. He sends this message, so that Capt. Clarke cannot say afterwards that it was done without his knowledge. He, Sikukuni, does not want to fight the white people, but only to drive the kaffirs away ... I am about to punish these people that were once my children ... there must not be a chief amongst them ... Sikukuni says he does not want the kaffirs that have made peace with the whites above him. He himself wants to be paramount.[2]

Clarke, on receiving report of this, despatched his messengers to Sekhukhune to warn him that an attack on the chiefdoms mentioned would have grave consequences. The paramount responded that 'the country was his, that he was quite ready for war ... that he would not trouble the people at Fort Weeber but that the ground was his'. His answer persuaded Clark that a 'collision cannot now be avoided'.[3]

---

[1] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 17.2.1878-4.3.1878; C.2100, No. 39, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 23.2.1878 and encs.

[2] C.2100, No. 72, Message from Sekhukhune to Landdros of Lydenburg, 2.3.1878.

[3] Ibid., Clarke to Shepstone, 5.3.1878.

These developments provoked widespread alarm amongst the white inhabitants of the neighbouring districts. Once again, a distorting lens formed from rumour and exaggeration tinged events with a decidedly ominous hue. Fears that the Pedi army was about to fall on Lydenburg and Middelburg found confirmation in the activities of Pedi regiments. On 6 March, Geroge Eckersley - the resident at Fort Burgers - was visited by a contingent of 500 Pedi warriors, and although they did not threaten attack, Eckersley decided to abandon the fort. On the following days, Pedi regiments were seen in the invirons of Krugerspost and in the Watervals River valley. While it remains difficult to disentangle fact from fear it seems that cattle were seized. Two farmers, Jan Venter and J. Minaar, who were returning home in their wagon when they had the misfortune to encounter a group of Pedi raiders, were fired on and Venter was killed. These events were held by officials and colonists alike to presage a full-scale Pedi attack.[1] It never took place, however, and it seems unlikely that there was ever a real threat that it would. The most likely explanation for these incidents is that they were designed to relieve Lexolane from the threat of attack while avoiding a direct confrontation with Clarke's forces. If this was the intention then the tactic enjoyed at least temporary success for, in the alarm which gripped the district in the wake of the raids, Clarke abandoned Fort Weeber and returned to the town of Lydenburg. When he returned to the fort later in the month, he found that it had been burnt to the ground.[2] Not only were these incidents not the prelude to a major Pedi offensive, but Sekhukhune's threatened attacks on disloyal chiefdoms also failed to materialise.

---

[1] Smith, 'The Campaigns', p. 15; T.A., S.S. 270, Petition, Glynn and 3 others, 18.3.1878; B.M.A. Abt. 3, Fach 4/13, Tagebuch Arkona, 11.3.1877.

[2] B.M.A., Abt. 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch Phatametsane, 25.3.1878.

These events were, nonetheless, portrayed in a thoroughly sinister light by Shepstone in his despatches to Carnarvon and to the latter's successor as Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. In these accounts the paramount was, in addition to being portrayed as poised on the verge of launching his army against his neighbours, presented as being responsible for orchestrating acts of encroachment and resistance through the region.[1] The similarity of this picture of developments to that which prevailed prior to the war in 1876 owed more than a little to the fact that Nachtigal played a leading part in its construction. After the disastrous campaign against the Pedi polity in 1876, both Nachtigal and Merensky had welcomed imperial intervention in the belief that it would invest the Transvaal state with sufficient power and efficiency for it to be able to facilitate missionary endeavour. In particular they believed that the power of independent chiefs, like Sekhukhune, was the principal stumbling-block to their work. They also shared a keen concern that the state should uphold and enforce private property in land.[2] Nachtigal, whose special interests have been outlined above, once again achieved a key position as interpreter, intermediary and commentator on processes at work within the Pedi polity 'whose information I [Clarke] have always found trustworthy'.[3] Clarke's reports also reveal that much of his sense of the history of the region was strongly coloured by the missionary view. Missionaries were after all his principal and most persuasive informants.[4]

---

1 C.2100, No. 39, Nachtigal to Roth, 14.1.1878; T.A., S.S. 269, R.743/78, Nachtigal to Clark, 2.3.1878.

2 See ch. 8, part 2, and C.2734, No. 21, Merensky to Bartle Frere, 1.5.1879.

3 C.2100, No. 39, Clarke to Shepstone, 12.2.1878.

4 See, C.2316, No. 6, Memo. on the political situation existing in the Lydenburg district, M. Clarke, 10.12.1878, which is clearly strongly influenced by a missionary perspective.

In January and February of 1878, Nachtigal wrote a series of letters to Clarke and to the Landdros of Lydenburg, George Roth, detailing what he believed to be the aggressive intentions of Sekhukhune. However, whereas in 1876 Nachtigal had depicted Sekhukhune as the manipulating power behind the scenes, in 1878 he cast Cetshwayo in the role of master-puppeteer. Shepstone found this interpretation compelling, as it conformed to the view that he held and propagated that the Zulu kingdom was the 'root of all evil'.[1] Nachtigal's letters played a dual role. They helped to shape appreciation of events by local officials and they were also deployed by Shepstone and Clarke in their despatches which were designed to demonstrate the malign intentions of the Pedi paramount and the Zulu king.[2]

Other than the assertions of Nachtigal and Shepstone there is, however, little to support this interpretation. This is, of course, not to deny that Sekhukhune's awareness of the growing rift between the Transvaal government and the Zulu kingdom may have persuaded him that he had additional room for manoeuvre in his own relationship with the new administration. Nonetheless, the policy pursued by the Maroteng paramountcy is more convincingly explained in terms of the need to repair its own position than by the promptings which may have been received from the Zulu king. Indeed, Montieth has recently concluded after an exhaustive examination of the evidence for the existence of a 'conspiracy' between the Zulu and Pedi polities, that, while contacts took place, an active alliance was never formed.[3]

---

1 C.2100, No. 39, Nachtigal to Roth, 14.1.1878; T.A. S.S. 269, R. 743/78, Nachtigal to Clarke, 2.3.1878 and N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 11.12.1877.

2 C.2100, No. 39, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 23.2.1878; N.A., A.96 Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Bartle Frere, 19.3.1878.

3 Montieth, 'Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune', pp. 170-76.

However, it was not only the influence of Cetshwayo that was invoked to account for the attitude adopted by the Maroteng paramountcy. Clarke and his superiors were increasingly convinced that 'seditious representations' made by certain Boers to Sekhukhune influenced his actions.[1] This belief partly resulted from their apparent inability to explain Sekhukhune's position without invoking a conspiracy of some kind. It also stemmed from their alarm at growing burgher disaffection. But it also had some firmer support in the pattern of events.

As his relationship with the new administration deteriorated, Sekhukhune began to explore the possibility of exploiting the conflicts which existed within colonial society to his own advantage. Part of the paramount's response to Clarke's message warning against attacking chiefdoms to the west of the Leolu Mountains was to state that 'the English Government had gone the wrong way to work with him; that he would return to the Boers'.[2] After the resumption of war, Pedi raiding parties appear to have gone to some lengths to foster the impression that the English, rather than the Boer community, were the intended object of attack. The belief that Boer cattle and farms were safe from attack heightened suspicion that a conspiracy existed and J.A. (Abel) Erasmus, who farmed near Krugerspost, became the principal Boer suspect.[3] Official suspicion received apparent confirmation after Sekhukhune's capture. Later, probably in an attempt to stave off execution by denying responsibility and pandering to the prejudices of his captors, the paramount declared before Henrique Shepstone, 'I do not blame the English for what has happened to me, it is the Boers who misled me and counselled me to resist,

---

1 Smith, 'The Campaigns', p. 18.

2 C.2100, No. 72, Clarke to Osborn, 5.3.1878.

3 Smith, 'The Campaigns', pp. 18-19.

I blame Abel Erasmus ... for my present position'.[1] He claimed that he had regular contact with Erasmus through a Tsonga messenger who had lived on the latter's farm and that Erasmus's advice had been decisive in persuading him to resist Shepstone's demands. In a later sworn deposition, Sekhukhune stated that Erasmus had secured the execution of one of his tenants who had reported his activities to the British.[2]

While Sekhukhune's attempts to transfer the responsibility for the policies which he adopted onto Erasmus were clearly disingenuous, there is evidence which shows that a relationship had been formed. Two refugees from the Pedi domain who were questioned while the war was still under way testified to the fact that contacts had taken place, and a later excavation of the spot where Sekhukhune had claimed that the murder was committed led to the discovery of a body in an advanced stage of decomposition.[3] The role of Erasmus, therefore, merits further attention.

Erasmus had emerged by the early 1870s as a man of some standing in the Lydenburg district. His position was in part based on successful land speculation and hunting expeditions. He also capitalised on the resentment of those excluded from the patronage of the local Veldcornet, P. de Villiers, to build up a personal following. When the latter resigned in 1876, Erasmus was elected in his stead.[4] After a period of hesitation after annexation, Erasmus took the oath of allegiance, declared his support for the new administration and retained office.. During the course of 1877, he wrote a series of letters to Shepstone detailing how the loss of cattle and labour, along with poor harvests and the denial of access to land, had blighted the district. While he appealed for aid on behalf of his

---

[1] C.2505, No. 19, Declaration of Chief Sekukuni to H.C. Shepstone, 10.12.1879;

[2] C.2584 No. 20, Declaration by Chief Sekukuni to H.C. Shepstone, 23.12.1879.

[3] Smith, 'The Campaigns', p. 20.

[4] T.A., W.202, Obituary of J.A. Erasmus; S.S. 214, R.2445/76, Cooper to Erasmus, 19.9.1876; E.V.R. 220, Petition, J.A. Erasmus and 20 others, 26.4.1873.

fellow burghers, he was particularly concerned to secure grants or loans to assist his own efforts.[1] The administration, however, fobbed off his requests and, influenced by this rebuff and by growing burgher disaffection, Erasmus became outspoken in his criticisms of British rule.[2]

Although Erasmus's changing political attitude probably played a part in persuading him to enter into dealings with Sekhukhune, there is also evidence which suggests that economic considerations conditioned his actions. In October 1879, Tamakana - a refugee from the Maroteng capital - made a lengthy statement to Clarke. From this it becomes plain that Erasmus played a key role in the gun trade from Delagoa Bay to the Pedi domain, and it also transpires that he had undertaken to secure the paramount a cannon from the Portuguese. Part of Erasmus's reward for these activities was that he received a supply of labour from Sekhukhune.[3] On the basis of this it seems reasonable to suggest that Erasmus, having failed to gain satisfaction from his approaches to the Transvaal state, turned instead to the opportunities presented by the Pedi polity. The links established are also reminiscent of those that characterised the range of relationships of exchange and, to some extent, clientage, which developed between Boer notables and African rulers in the northern and eastern Transvaal from the 1850s onwards. These have formed one of the recurring sub-themes of this study.[4] One of the features of this informal network of relationships was that is sustained a two-way flow of political information. The evidence of both Tamakana and an earlier refugee from the Pedi domain, Andries Balushi, suggests that Erasmus kept Sekhukhune

---

1 T.A., S.S. 237, R.2095/77, Erasmus to Shepstone, 12.5.1877; S.S. 242, R.2953/77, Erasmus to Shepstone, 1.8.1877; S.S. 238, R.3556/77, Erasmus to Shepstone, 28.8.1877,; S.S. 238, R.3357/77, Erasmus to Shepstone, 4.9.1877.

2 Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', p. 340.

3 C.2482, No. 158, Statement of Tamakana before M. Clarke, 26.10.1879.

4 See ch. 4, part 2, and ch. 6, part 1.

informed of developments within colonial society and that he encouraged Maroteng resistance.[1] It is also possible that Erasmus may have communicated the paramount's assurances to his fellow burghers. The point remains, however, that the relationship was one of mutual convenience, shaped by the perceived interests of both parties, and ultimately based on trade and labour - it was not the cause of either's actions.

It seems that the belief that a 'conspiracy' or alliance with either the Zulu or the Boers shaped Pedi actions, while feeding on the fact that contacts did take place, had its most secure basis in the world view and mode of explanation of the missionaries and officials who propagated it. The policies pursued by the paramountcy can be quite adequately accounted for without invoking the influence of external agitators, be they Cetshwayo or Abel Erasmus. Indeed, the recourse to explanation by reference to external manipulation often appears to be the result of failure to understand the processes of conflict and change at work within the Pedi polity and the pressures which operated upon the paramount.

Shepstone and Clarke found overwhelming evidence of the sinister intentions of Sekhukhune in the events of February and March 1878. Shepstone argued that unless the power of the paramount was broken there was a risk of 'a general rising among the numerous native tribes' and urged that additional troops should be moved to the Transvaal.[2] Towards the end of March, Shepstone wrote to Major Lanyon informing him that although Sekhukhune had not repeated or followed up his raid on the Waterval River valley he nonetheless intended to proceed against him. He did not 'intend to dignify the suppression of aggression on Sikukuni's part by calling it war' but he was 'fully resolved effectually to put him down'.[3]

---

1 C.2482, No. 158, Statement of Tamakana before M. Clarke, 26.10.1879; T.A., LL 4, Statement of Andries Balushi before Landdros, 8.8.1878.

2 C.2100, No. 39, Shepstone to Carnarvon, 23.2.1878.

3 N.A., A.96, Shepstone Coll. 68, Shepstone to Lanyon, 26.3.1878.

Shepstone also situated this response in the context of the wider need to enforce control over African societies, writing,

> There are indications of the existence of a kind of common desire in the native mind in South Africa to try and overcome the white intruders ... They are, however, incapable of precise combination and so long as we can roll one stone out of the way at a time, we shall be alright.
>
> Sikukuni is my first stone, confound him![1]

The Zulu were now to be the second, but in both cases, Shepstone grievously miscalculated the amount of force that would be required to dislodge them.

---

[1] Ibid., Shepstone to Bulwer, 30.3.1878.

PART THREE

The Campaign

The war that ensued has been described in considerable detail in a number of accounts.[1] It fell into three main phases. The first was initiated by an attack on Lexolane's stronghold which developed into a two-month siege. Shepstone and Clarke realised in consequence that direct attacks on the principal Pedi strongholds were out of the question with the combination of volunteers, 'Zulu' police and African auxiliaries from subject chiefdoms which they had at their disposal. Instead, a number of forts were built at strategic points within the Pedi domain. These were manned by volunteers under instruction to carry out regular patrols with the objective of disrupting production on the land and ultimately of starving the Pedi into submission.

The second phase began in August of 1878 when Colonel Hugh Rowlands was placed in charge of the troops in the Transvaal and regulars were made available for an assault on the Maroteng capital. Rolands had a force of some 2000 men at his command but most of these had to be deployed to garrison posts on the perimeter of the heartland of the polity. On 3 October a force of 139 infantry and 338 mounted men set out with plans either to take the Maroteng stronghold or to lay siege to it while the royal cattle were captured. The response of the Pedi regiments was to employ the tactics of harassment and ambush which had proved so effective against invading armies in the past. Rowlands rapidly realised that his force was too small to entertain any reasonable hope of success. Thus, disconcerted by Pedi tactics, thwarted in his attempts to secure water and forage, and alarmed by the early appearance of horse sickness, Rowlands, after consulting with Clarke, decided to retreat to Fort Burgers.[2]

---

1 Smith, 'The Campaigns' is the fullest of these; see also Van Rooyen, 'Verhoudinge', pp. 308-35; Bonner, 'The Swazi', pp. 324-7.

2 Smith, 'The Campaigns', pp. 31-4 and C.2220, No. 131, Frere to Hicks Beach, 28.10.1878 and encs.

This ill-fated attack underlined the extent to which Shepstone had miscalculated the military strength of the Pedi polity. He wrote to Rowlands:

> The fact is that Sikukuni's power to resist or to defend himself were underrated from the beginning; we had to act upon the information of those who said they knew; we knew nothing ourselves; ... By the time you took over the command I had come to the conclusion that to subdue Sikukuni was a more difficult task than to subdue Cetywayo.[1]

The invasion of Zululand in January of 1879 necessitated a further withdrawal of troops and volunteers from the Pedi domain. This allowed Pedi regiments to move fairly freely through the region recouping cattle losses and attacking groups who had deserted, or wavered in their support of the paramountcy. The Pedi polity, however, while far from being on the verge of defeat had been deeply scarred by the years of almost incessant warfare. Agricultural and pastoral production had been consistently disrupted and regular grain shortages had resulted. A number of groups had been driven by these pressures to move out of the area, and political cleavages within the polity had deepened. In the winter of 1879 the forts were occupied once again and patrols were resumed. At the end of June, however, Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived in South Africa to assume civil and military command of Natal and the Transvaal and issued instructions that all offensive operations against Sekhukhune should be halted pending his arrival in Pretoria.[2]

Wolseley, having supervised the capture of Cetshwayo and the settlement of Zululand, arrived in Pretoria on 27 September 1879. He held the hope that the destruction of Zulu power would persuade Sekhukhune to accept peace terms, and Clarke sent messengers to the paramount requesting him

---

[1] Quoted in Montieth, 'Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune', p. 166.

[2] Smith, 'The Campaigns', pp. 35-40.

to send emissaries to hear the conditions. These were that Sekhukhune should acknowledge British sovereignty and pay taxes, that he should preserve peace and order in the area under his control, that he should pay a fine of 2500 head of cattle and that he should permit the establishment of military or police posts within the heartland of the polity. Wolseley's view, which had the support of Hicks Beach, was that if these terms were rejected 'it will be necessary to destroy Sekukuni's power by force'.[1]

These terms once again raised the issue of the basis of the Transvaal government's right to exercise sovereignty over the Pedi polity. Colonial Office officials attempted to evade the problem of the subject, or otherwise, status of Sekhukhune by arguing that the paramount's conduct since annexation had given 'us a moral right to conquer him and restrain him from further mischief'.[2] Wolseley felt that it was unwise to go into the 'original justice' of the disputes with the Pedi polity. In his opinion there were obvious difficulties between the colonists and the Pedi

> Such differences where savages are concerned cannot be satisfied by any civilised method of adjustment ... According to native ideas, a difficulty can end only in one simple way, by the confirmation of the ascendancy of the stronger and the subjection of the weaker.[3]

Ten emissaries from the paramountcy arrived at Fort Weeber to hear the terms on 10 October and returned to Sekhukhune with Clarke's messengers. The refugee Temakana gave an account to Clarke of the impact of the conditions. Sekhukhune called a pitso at the capital:

---

1 C.2482, No. 101, Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 30.9.1879; ibid., No 120, Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 30.9.1879; Preston (ed.) Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 131.

2 CO 291/3/17514, Minute by Fairfield, 8.11.1879.

3 C. 2482, No. 158, Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 28.10.1879.

> He said that peace was offered, and that he for his part was tired of the war, that every person who could afford it should bring two or three head of cattle, so that he might pay the fine demanded. Putlakle, a petty chief, said to Secucuni, "You are a coward, let the white people fight for the cattle if they want them, we have no cattle to give". The people applauded.
>
> Paswana said he was for peace, but he was driven away.
>
> Secucuni said that they were wrong to call him a coward, "your words are my words, but I wished to hear what you thought" ... [the people] replied that they would pay no fine and that they would tell that to Captain Clarke.[1]

Once again, the evidence suggests that Sekhukhune, rather than being in control of internal political process, as contemporary observers appeared to imagine, was constantly forced to refashion his responses in the light of political opinion and struggles within the polity. It appears that the weight of popular feeling remained on the side of continued resistance until the end, and firmly against surrendering cattle either to the paramountcy or the Transvaal government.

On 21 October, Sekhukhune's reply was brought to Clarke. He stated that he was too poor to pay the fine but requested that Clarke should visit him to discuss the matter further. This Clarke refused to do. Instead, he despatched three more messengers to the paramountcy who, while they were not allowed to see Sekhukhune, attended a meeting of royals, kgoro heads and subordinate chiefs held at the capital 'the common people having been driven away'. The main spokesmen were the paramount's brothers and sons. They claimed that conflicts had been the result of the British enforcing demands made by the Z.A.R. They had been

> ...thankful for the peace till we found that the cattle were demanded from us. We then saw the English were catching us in a trap so we decided that we would not pay the cattle ... we discovered that the English were no better than the Boers.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., Statement of Tamakana before M. Clarke, 26.10.1879.

[2] Ibid., Nopatula's statement, 25.10.1879.

They maintained that the 'English' had begun the war by interfering in the dispute between Lexolane and Pokwane and stated

> ... they will never be subject to the English who compel their subjects to build forts and work for them; that the English are liars, that rather than be in the position of the subject tribes they will fight, that they won't pay taxes before they had a good fight for it.[1]

The messengers' accounts of the military defeat suffered by the Zulu kingdom were greeted with considerable scepticism. They were asked 'how was it that cattle were not to be seen in the towns for sale? and how was it that prisoners were not sent to work on the roads?'[2] Sekhukhune later told Henrique Shepstone that he had initially been unconvinced by reports that the Zulu had been defeated and was only finally persuaded of their truth in November.[3]

Wolseley on receiving this response felt that he had no alternative but to vindicate the Transvaal government's authority by force of arms. To allow Sekhukhune to maintain his independence would be to imperil the exercise of British jurisdiction over the African population and

> ... no native ... will ever pay tax except at the point of the bayonet and the orderly machine of civil government will be compelled to yield its functions to a system of military patrolling.[4]

To this by now familiar litany was added the argument that a decisive demonstration of imperial strength was needed to quell the stirrings of revolt amongst the Burgher population. Wolseley 'considered that nothing would have a greater effect on the Boers than to show them that we were both able and willing to destroy Sekukuni's power against which they had themselves unsuccessfully contended'.[5]

---

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

3 C.2505, No. 19, Statement of Sekukuni to H.C. Shepstone, 10.12.1879.

4 C.2482, No. 158, Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 28.10.1879.

5 Quoted in Smith, 'The Campaigns', p. 44.

The desire to impress the extent of imperial power on both the African and burgher population also shaped the military tactics which Wolseley adopted in order to subdue the Pedi polity. It was one of the key considerations which persuaded him against employing methods of siege and harassment and influenced his decision to launch a direct attack on the Maroteng capital. Wolseley gradually gained a fuller impression of the formidable defences of this stronghold, confiding in his diary that 'even brave men ... view the mountain and its defenders with superstitious awe'.[1] He realised that its conquest would be best achieved by sheer weight of numbers and would entail heavy casualties amongst the assailants. Wolseley, therefore, in time-honoured Transvaal fashion, turned to the Swazi kingdom for military assistance. The response of the Swazi rulers, influenced by the impact of the defeat of the Zulu kingdom and their desire to consolidate their relationship with British power, exceeded all expectations. On 19 November, 8000 Swazi warriors - double the anticipated number - and accompanied by Mampuru, joined the campaign.[2]

The army mustered for this invasion of the heartland of the Pedi polity was more than three times the size of the force mobilized by the Z.A.R. in 1876. Aside from the Swazi regiments, it consisted of 3500 troops and volunteers and 3000 Transvaal African auxiliaries. The latter came mainly from Zoutpansberg chiefdoms and Ndzundza Ndebele in the eastern Transvaal. The campaign was ultimately to cost £383,000, an expenditure which the Z.A.R. could never have contemplated, much less afforded.[3] From 20 November, this army, divided into eastern and western columns, converged on the Pedi capital. Little resistance was encountered en route and by 25 November, the main column was within three miles of the Maroteng stronghold.

---

1 Preston (ed.), Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 135.

2 Bonner, 'The Swazi', p. 325.

3 Smith, 'The Campaigns', p. 61.

The paramount had abandoned Thaba Mosego in 1869 after the hill's military vulnerability had been revealed by the Swazi attack. Tsate, the new Maroteng capital lay close by in the same fertile, flat-bottomed and steep-sided valley formed by a fold in the Leolu Mountains. The town, which consisted of some 3000 huts, had been built in the angle made by the eastern range of the mountains as they curved to partially close the valley to the south. While cultivated lands stretched along the valley floor, the huts nestled along the valley's edge and encroached on the mountain side. These slopes were fortified by line after line of stone-walling pocketed by sconces at regular intervals. Long lines of rifle pits had been dug along the exposed perimeter of the town. In the heart of the valley was a hill which became known as the 'Fighting Kopje'. A testament to an ancient volcanic eruption, it was a mass of rock and tumbled boulders 150 feet high. Honeycombed with caves which were protected with stone breastworks, it was intended and destined to be the last line of defence.[1]

Not only was the attacking army much larger than in 1876, but the defending force was also significantly smaller. Merensky suggests that, as a result of the participation of the Swazi army and the probability that large areas of the polity would be scoured in the search for cattle and captives, subordinate chiefdoms were forced to hold back some of their regiments from the defence of the capital to ensure the safety of their home areas. The impact of years of war on political cleavages within the polity and in persuading groups to migrate to areas of comparative safety had also reduced the extent of the support the Maroteng could expect. Merensky calculates that Tsate was defended by no more than 4000 warriors in 1879.[2]

---

[1] Based on *ibid.*, pp. 49-55 and visits to the site of the capital and battle area in 1976.

[2] Merensky, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 338-43.

Wolseley's plan of attack was that while the main column would approach the town along the valley, the Swazi warriors would descend upon it from the heights which lay behind it. At 4 a.m. on 28 November with the sky lightening in anticipation of dawn, the first exploding shell from the attackers' Krupp guns arced, with uncertain accuracy, towards the Fighting Kopje. Under the cover of this bombardment, two assaults were launched which, while driving defenders back from the rifle pits, were pinned down under heavy and sustained Pedi fire. With the attack thus halted, Wolseley and his troops anxiously awaited the delayed arrival of the Swazi army. When it finally appeared it had a decisive impact. The Swazi warriors emergence on the heights behind Tsate was greeted with

> ... deafening cheers from the troops below and sighs of relief from Wolseley and his staff. They stood poised on the summit, silhouetted against the skyline, with their assegais and shields, an awesome spectacle.[1]

The Pedi regiments were unprepared for an attack from the rear, and with the advantage of surprise the Swazi swept down the mountainside sustaining heavy casualties but driving the defenders before them. With the Pedi warriors trapped between the descending Swazi and the advancing British troops, a terrible carnage ensued. By 9.30 a.m., the valley sides had been cleared and the town was in flames.

Fighting Kopje nonetheless remained unsubdued. A combined attack was launched on it from four sides, and after heavy fighting the assailants reached the summit. Its caves, however, remained crowded with men, women and children who refused to surrender. Large charges of gun cotton were placed at cave entrances to destroy the stone defences and to terrify their occupants into submission. The explosions did not have the desired effect as none of the Pedi surrendered, and in some instances, the fuses on the

---

[1] Smith, 'The Campaings', p. 52.

charges were successfully cut. It was then decided to starve the defenders out. As night fell, however, a heavy rain drenched the valley and reduced visibility. Taking advantage of these conditions the besieged Pedi emerged from the caves and forced their way past the picket.[1]

The day's fighting took a heavy toll on the lives of both attackers and defenders. Although only thirteen Europeans were killed and thirty-five wounded, between 500-600 Swazi warriors perished in the attack and an equivalent number were wounded. It is difficult to establish the extent of Pedi casualties with any precision but conservative estimates place the number of dead in excess of a thousand. An indication of the extent of the carnage is provided by the record of the fatalities within the paramount's family. Three of Sekhukhune's brothers and nine of his children, including his son and designated heir Morwamotshe, died in the battle. The paramount, who had sheltered in a cave behind the town during the battle, made his escape from the valley the following day. He was, however, tracked to the cave where he had taken refuge and surrendered to Captain Ferreira on 2 December. Sekhukhune was taken to Pretoria whence it was intended that he should join Cetshwayo and Langalibelele in exile in the Cape. Wolseley argued that 'Sikukuni, in the estimation of the Kaffirs of the Transvaal has enjoyed a fame as a chief of dignity and importance, hardly inferior to that of Ketshwayo among the Zulus'. He believed that the hope that Sekhukhune might be allowed to return to the Pedi domain would sustain

> ... illusory and disturbing expectations among a people whom we are attempting to wean from the ways of savage life into complete submission to a civilized sovereignty ... and we may imperil the success of our settlement by leaving among the nascent forces of a new society the seed of a weakening ambition for the old rule.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 54.

[2] C. 2505, No. 19, Declaration of Chief Sekukuni to H.C. Shepstone, 10.12.1879.

[3] C.2584, No. 19, Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 13.2.1880.

One can only guess at the impact of the destruction of the Pedi capital which had for so long proved invincible to Zulu, Swazi, Boer and British attack on the consciousness of its subject and surrounding population. An independent Pedi polity had provided a partial haven from Swazi raids and from Boer and British demands for tax, tribute and rent. It had provided an alternative focus of power and authority to the Swazi kingdom and the Z.A.R. and Transvaal states. This, amongst other things, had allowed its subjects to repudiate the basis of the system of property rights which the Republican and colonial state sought to entrench. Above all it had become a potent symbol of resistance within the Transvaal and perhaps the most telling consequence of its destruction was that by the end of January, in 1881, Henrique Shepstone could report to Lanyon that for the first time African taxes had been systematically collected in the northern and eastern Transvaal and a total of some £33,690 had been raised. Wolseley had achieved his intention that the attack on Tsate should be a singular demonstration of imperial power. The demonstration had not ended on the day of 28 November. Swazi warriors had continued the onslaught for another ten days, attacking villages and seizing unknown quantities of cattle and captives. Wolseley observed this with grim satisfaction, noting in his diary 'my object is to strike terror into the hearts of the surrounding tribes by the utter destruction of Sikukuni, root and branch, so the more the Swazis raid and destroy, the better my purpose is effected'.[1]

Imperial intervention in the Transvaal, while initially affording the Maroteng paramountcy additional room for manoeuvre, was in pursuit of objectives which were not easily made compatible with the continued independence of the Pedi polity. The years of British administration

---

1 Preston (ed.), Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley, p. 179.

proved to be a crucial turning point in the history of the Transvaal. In 1876, the authority of the Z.A.R. was crumbling and its finances were in confusion. By 1881, when continuing burgher resistance resulted in the withdrawal of direct imperial control, the balance of power had been tipped decisively in favour of the colonial state. Its administrative machinery had been re-organised and overhauled. A framework for a more effective and centralised administration of the African population had been established, and the basis for the relatively efficient collection of revenue had been laid down. As importantly a system of private property in land was entrenched and protected and the movement of migrant labour was facilitated. The state structure which the British bequeathed in 1881 was vastly superior to that which they had inherited in 1877. Thus, as Marks and Atmore have pointed out, these years of British rule foreshadowed the period of Milner's reconstruction of the Transvaal after the South African War, which laid the basis for the ongoing development of capitalism.[1] It would, of course, be teleological to plot the motives of imperial policy in the 1870s simply by means of its consequences for the Transvaal state. The case, however, for situating the expansionist imperial policy of the period in the context of the first stages of the South African industrial revolution is strong. The imperial intervention which resulted strengthened the Transvaal state and destroyed the power of the two most powerful independent polities - the Pedi and the Zulu. With their destruction, the balance of power in South African finally swung decisively in the favour of colonial society.

---

[1] Atmore and Marks, 'Imperial Factor', p. 126; see also de Kiewiet, Imperial Factor, pp. 242-3.

EPILOGUE

While the two final chapters are designed to conclude this thesis as well as to account for and describe the defeat of the polity, this epilogue briefly sketches the fates of some of the principal historical characters.

Sekhukhune's statements and depositions before Henrique Shepstone led to the issue of a warrant for the arrest of Abel Erasmus on charges of rebellion, sedition and murder. Initially, Erasmus sought refuge in the Orange Free State; but on 15 June 1890 on the basis of legal advice he surrendered to the Landdros of Lydenburg. However, he was never brought to trial. In the worsening political climate which prevailed in the colony, both the Colonial Office and the Transvaal government were loath to take action for fear of provoking further burgher resistance. In March, Hicks Beach was advised to tell Wolseley confidentially not to press a charge of murder on 'native evidence only'.[1] In the event, the Colonial Secretary sent Wolseley the pointed message that he hoped 'further enquiries may show that Abel Erasmus has not been so gravely involved in treason and crime as the evidence of Sikukuni would indicate'.[2] After Erasmus's arrest, Owen Lanyon thought it best to 'let sleeping dogs lie' and Erasmus was released on condition that he re-appear in six months.[3] On retrocession in 1881, Erasmus was appointed native commissioner and played a critical role in the history of the eastern Transvaal for the next twenty years.

Sekhukhune was not moved to the Cape, but detained in Pretoria. The British administrators allowed Mampuru to settle in the Pedi heartland where he set about marshalling support and entrenching his position. In 1881,

---

[1] CO 291/5/2917, Minute, 9.3.1880.

[2] C.2584, No. 54, Hicks Beach to Wolseley, 11.3.1880.

[3] T.A. SS 437/R.2701, Minute by Lanyon, 24.7.1880 and report by Vanrenen, 16.7.1880.

however, after the retrocession, Sekhukhune was released from prison by the Z.A.R. and allowed to return to the eastern Transvaal. There, over the next year, he and Mampuru jockeyed for position. Their conflict finally ended on 13 August 1882 when a band of assassins sent by Mampuru stabbed Sekhukhune to death. Mampuru sought refuge from Z.A.R. reprisal among the Ndzundza Ndebele. But, after the defeat and destruction of that chiefdom by Republican forces in 1883, he was captured, tried for murder and, on the second attempt, hanged on 22 November 1883.[1]

Johannes Dinkwanyane, wounded in both arms and the chest, died seven hours after the battle for Mafolofolo ended on 13 July 1876. Within days of his death different versions of his last words were circulating in the eastern Transvaal. The Berlin Missionaries were told by his followers that he had instructed them not to abandon the spot but to fight on, and that he had urged them not to waver from their Christian faith. An alternative version which had wide currency amongst the white community was tha he had rejoiced that he had met his death at the hands of a black rather than a white. In the following months some of the remnants of the community settled in the heartland of the Pedi polity. Others remained to the south and continued to deny the rights of the Transvaal state and local farmers to land, labour and tax until the defeat of the Maroteng in 1879. Yet others settled on mission stations. In the longer term, the remnants of the community, led by Johannes' son Micha Dinkwanyane, were in the forefront of African land purchase in the eastern Transvaal, and former members of the Mafolofolo community continued to be one vital cutting edge in the spread of Christian belief in the region. In 1976, members of independent Christian churches interviewed in Sekhukhuneland recalled Dinkwanyane's life in biblical terms. Dinkwanyane is likened to Moses, leading his people into freedom.[2]

---

[1] Merensky, Erinnerungen, pp. 400-4; Van Coller, 'Mampoer', 97-136.

[2] B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/8, Tagebuch Lydenburg, 22.9.1876, 15.10.1875; B.M.B., 1878, pp. 401-2.

APPENDIX ONE

Extract from P. Delius, 'Report on research into the nineteenth century history of the Pedi', unpublished seminar paper, African History Seminar, University of London, 4 May 1977.

By far the most illuminating material on Pedi society and history before 1877 is to be found in the published and unpublished records of the Berlin Missionary Society. As the archives of this organisation have not received a great deal of attention from historians working on southern Africa, it is perhaps worth dealing with them at some length. The Berlin Missionary Society began its work in the Transvaal in 1859, and despite some major setbacks like the abandonment of their stations in the Pedi area in 1864 and 1866, rapidly expanded their activities in the central, eastern and northern Transvaal. By 1898 they had 27 mission stations and 33 missionaries in the Transvaal. The society ensured a regular flow of information from the missionaries in the field to Berlin. It was incumbent on each of the mission stations to maintain a detailed diary of the life of the mission and also to send yearly and half-yearly reports to the mission headquarters. Both these diaries and reports, along with letters from the missionaries, are in the mission station files in the archives of the society in East Berlin. The second major category of documents in these archives are the personal files of the various missionaries. These files are of less interest to a researcher with the kinds of concerns which informed my work, but do contain information on the recruitment, promotions, and complaints of the missionaries. They also occasionally contain fascinating items; in one case sections of the personal diary of Nachtigal, an individual crucial to the history of the Pedi;;in another, an unpublished manuscript of Endemann who also worked amongst the Pedi. Problems in the reading of this material stem from the use of miniscule gothic script on both sides of semi-transparent paper. A number of the early files have also suffered from the combined action of fire and water and are in imminent danger of total collapse. There are also no indices or registers to assist the researcher in processing the files. Photocopying requires the smuggling in of photo-copying paper from West Berlin and of the copies out, an operation which adds more

than a little excitement to the otherwise dreary process of clearing the checkpoint each day.

I made extensive copies of the files of mission stations in and on the periphery of the Pedi domain from 1860-1882, I subsequently (1978) deposited this material in the University of South Africa archives which have a growing collection of German missionary material. The archives undertook in exchange to provide a typed transcript of these documents which is now (1980) approaching completion and which should provide substantial assistance to future research on the region.

More accessible and more legible are the published records of the society and the critical source for these is the Missions-Berichte. Twenty-four parts of the Berichte were published each year and in them a selection of the reports of the missionaries and sections of the station diaries. In the early years of missionary activity in the Transvaal much of the most interesting material is published in the Berichte. With the expansion of the activities of the mission however there is a corresponding decline in the coverage of each mission station. Also published in this journal are cultural and historical comments on the societies amongst which the missionaries worked, travel diaries and life histories of converts, the latter being valuable sources of wider historical information. A comparison of the published versions with the original documents shows that the amount of editing was fairly limited. Sections of the station diaries and correspondence of the missionaries also appear in the various books written by members of the society. T. Wangemann, the mission director for much of this period must have verged on being a compulsive writer and his compulsion was fuelled by his access to these files. While much of his writing represents syntheses of these sources, in some of it he explicitly presents sections of the original documents. Any researcher is thus well advised (and particularly one not well acquainted with gothic script) to exhaust these sources before tackling the archives.

A particularly valuable source was Nachtigal's personal diary which the University of South African archive had recently acquired and of which a typedtranscription has been made. This diary provides amplification of, and in some instances an alternative view to, the material in Berlin. It also includes historical traditions of a number of the societies in the north-eastern Transvaal, genealogies of prominent Pedi and converts and of particular interest are the life histories of inboekselings that Nachtigal collected.

The early period of missionary endeavour amongst the Pedi generated the most interesting comment on the society, a consequence of the fact that the missionaries were struggling to understand the people around them. It was in 1862, for example, that a detailed account of Pedi history was published by Merensky. Once the initial period of discovery and comment had ended, there was a marked development of an orthodoxy of concern with, and understanding of, African society. Language, polygyny and initiation dominate as areas of interest. There was also a growing hostility to 'traditional' authority. It was to the malevolent influence of the chiefs that mission failure was ascribed and the view of chieftaincy that developed was of a magico-religious despotism which amongst other things could not tolerate alternative religious forms. In the case of the Pedi this was particularly marked as a result of the conflicts between Sekhukhune and the missionaries. The result was that self-conscious observation and description of the society becomes less useful and also less extensive and some of the most illuminating insights are instead to be gained from casual observation. The view of the Pedi society that developed amongst the missionaries and in particular the view of it of Nachtigal and Merensky was crucial in the wider sense that even after their withdrawal from the immediate area they continued both to be a channel of communication between the Z.A.R. and the Pedi and also

commentators on events within Pedi society. Nachtigal played a critical role in the conflicts that developed between the Pedi and the Z.A.R. in the early 1870s.

The bulk of my time in South Africa was spent in or near the Pretoria archives (T.A.) and while at least two previous papers given to this seminar have touched on these archives it is perhaps worth elaborating on some of the points raised. There are two broad categories of documents for the period prior to the annexation of the Z.A.R. in 1877, those being the papers of the central administration and the local collections. The central collections consist of the Volksraad papers, the Uitvoerende Raad papers and the State Secretaries' papers. The Transvaal archives are dominated by the S.S. collection, some eight thousand volumes containing much of the most interesting material on almost any topic but into which startlingly trivial material has also been inserted. This material had also the most complete research aids in the form of registers and indexes although both are highly fallible. Particularly useful but incomplete for the period 1889 to 1900 is an English subject index which if used in conjunction with the Dutch name and office indexes provides at least an adequate indication of the contents of the volumes. The research aids for the other central collections are profoundly wanting before 1877 but like most things in the archive improve significantly after annexation. The local records, the Landdros papers, the Gold Commissioners' papers and the papers of the Republic of Lydenburg (1856-61) have to be worked on the basis of turning over every page. I was however fortunate in that local records of any kind remain; the Landdros papers for the Zoutpansberg district, for example, have been lost and a setback for my research was the absence of most of the papers of the Gold Commissioner for Pilgrims' Rest.

The early documentation provides fragmentary but important glimpses of African society in the north eastern Transvaal. There is little in the way of systematic reporting on events within African society and most of the material on the interaction between the Trekkers and their neighbours tends to relate to the formal aspects of the relationship. The informal relationships which existed are only fleetingly reflected in the records, part of the reason for this being that the basis for many of these relationships was illegal trade in arms and ammunition. After 1860 the missionaries did send reports and also write letters for chiefs although some of the information they supply is available in greater detail in the Berlin Missionary Society sources. The conflicts between the Pedi and the Z.A.R. in the 1870s, however, generated a greater flow of information. With the annexation of the Z.A.R. in 1877, and the establishment of a system of native commissioners and the appointment of Henrique Shepstone as Secretary for Native Affairs, a systematic attempt was made to gather information about the various African polities. As a result, the S.N. files for the annexation period are a mine of information, their value for the north-eastern districts being somewhat marred however by the influence on their contents of the world view of the missionaries. The structure established for the administration of 'native' affairs was retained after retrocession and with it at least an ideal of regular reporting. The native commissioner for the Lydenburg area, J.A. Erasmus (a man prominent in Transvaal mythology and Pedi demonology) was a man of action and not letters. Erasmus's penchant for action however generated letter-writing in others. Some of the most illuminating material for the period 1881-1900 is contained in the letters written by individuals retained by the paramountcy and other groups in the area to protest against the actions of the native commissioner and his assistants. Much of the most interesting correspondence and records of the various commissions

appointed to enquire into the allegations has been transferred from the S.N. files; fortunately, however, much of it came finally to rest in the S.S. collection.

At the inception of this research project it was clear that field work in the area, if possible at all, was liable to be far from problem-free and this premonition proved well-founded. The hope had been that my research time in South Africa would be equally divided between archival and field work. My entry into the field was delayed, however, by the initial rejection of my application for a research permit and the inadvisability of attempting to go into Sekhukhuneland during peak periods of the disturbances in the Transvaal. While I did manage to make a number of trips into the area during the course of the year, it was not until the last month and a half of my stay in South Africa that I was able to engage in concentrated field work. The consequence of this was that I had to work with a far more limited research strategy than I would otherwise have adopted. My aim was to collect information in a limited number of chiefdoms which had figured prominently in the nineteenth century records. My central concern was to enlarge my understanding of the nature of the role of the paramountcy in the area in the last century and my ambition to gain access to the paramount group at Mohlaletse had the added incentive that no researcher had worked with this group since the 1940s. In the event, it was at Mohlaletse that the largest single portion of my time in the field was spent.

The Pedi area is one which has been riven by conflicts and these conflicts still reverberate powerfully within the society and are critical in shaping the information available to a researcher. Succession disputes within the paramountcy have resulted in the secession of a number of failed contenders and their supporters. While the chieftaincy at Mohlaletse is generally recognised as the inheritor of the mantle of Sekhukhune there are a number of groups in the area who have or do challenge their

seniority. Probably most important amongst these in the modern context are the descendants of the followers of Sekhukune's brother Mampuru and this chiefdom has established its position as an alternative focus of allegiance for the chieftaincies in the Nebo area. The relative seniority of these two groups provides the basis for a seemingly endless and extremely complicated argument. It is disputes of this kind which provide the stuff, structure and mode of explanation of much of current Pedi tradition. The history of the reign of Sekhukhune for example will be recounted in terms of his dispute with Mampuru, other disputes which have not had the same long-term consequences are excluded and the struggle between the two brothers will be used as an explanation for the major events of the period like the wars between the Pedi and the Boers, and the Pedi and the British. While it is possible to glean some interesting material from these accounts, these succession disputes are also the aspect of Pedi history best covered in existing collections of oral tradition and in the documentary record. The information available on the period before the accession of Sekhukhune in 1861 is scanty and for the period prior to the difaqane there was little that emerged during field work to alter my reliance on the published traditions which I found in Nachtigal's diary, and the Berlin and Pretoria archives.

Aside from the rumblings of these debates the Pedi area witnessed a bitter and prolonged resistance to the attempts initiated in the latter half of the 1950s to refashion the chiefdoms through the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system. The cleavages that this conflict created ran across chiefly boundaries and a number of chiefdoms including the paramountcy suffered from acute internal division. The consequence for a number was the existence of two 'chiefs' one with government support and pro-B.A.'s and the other usually with more extensive support and anti-B.A.'s.

Initially, however, only a handful of chiefdoms accepted B,A,s and the paramountcy, internal division notwithstanding, played a prominent role in the resistance. Over the years, however, through a combination of official persuasion and coercion and no doubt the increasing realisation on the part of the chiefly elite that the system was in the long term designed to entrench their position, there was a progressive acceptance of B.A.s by individual chiefdoms and while the bulk in the Sekhukhuneland area appear to have waited on the decision by the paramountcy, this process whittled away at the prestige and authority of the group at Mohlaletse. The latter finally accepted in 1965 but the choice left open to the other chiefdoms as to whether or not to fall under the paramountcy precipitated a crisis in the position of the paramountcy and it appears possible at present that the authority of that group has been damaged beyond recovery. It was, in part, this crisis which persuaded the paramountcy after some hesitation to allow me to interview at Mohlaletse, but it also profoundly affected the nature of the history it was deemed fit for me to gather. Quite consciously, informants were attempting to give me a cleaned-up version of the past. A past in which superiority of rank in itself had proved sufficient to secure the allegiance of other groups and which had been characterised by the harmonious relationship that existed between the paramountcy and its subjects. The reverse problem occurred with a number of the subordinate chiefdoms for even those that have not opted out from under the paramountcy appear to be currently debating the wisdom of such a course and the tendency is either to deny allegiance at any point in time or to minimise the amount of contact which took place. A good part of my effort in the field was concentrated on attempting to reduce the levels of self-censorship at the paramountcy and in persuading other groups that I was not the 'stooge' of the former.

I succeeded rather better in the first objective than in the second. Part of the problem was the insistence of the paramount chief and the informants on group interviews, the object being to present me with a consensus view. While consensus regularly gave way to heated debate, the latter defied any attempt to record it. Equally in the group situation younger men who had had access to written accounts tended to assert their views at the expense of the older, less-educated men, who were less prone to quotation from published histories. It proved much easier to tap the knowledge of these older men outside the group interviewing situation and interviewing individually also reduced the level of censorship operated. It is, however, almost impossible to find uncontaminated traditions, even where informants have not read written accounts the information contained within these accounts has become part of the common fund of historical knowledge within the society and the effect of the vernacular histories has been particularly pervasive. The twentieth century has also witnessed the development of a number of local historians, usually men of some education, who are now deferred to as the repositories of history of the area. The man most prominent in this role in the case of the Pedi is the Reverend Mothubatse, ex-tribal secretary at Mohlaletse, a man of wide and deep historical knowledge and abiding historical curiosity, but whose information is the result of the synthesis of a variety of sources both oral and written. The interpretation of Pedi history of Reverend Mothubatse has both fed back into the society and has been heavily drawn upon by a number of researchers, notably Mönnig and Bothma.

This account in attempting to set the context in which my field work was conducted and to point up some of the problems involved perhaps conveys too gloomy a view. The problems are at their most acute in the

collection of political tradition. It was, however, possible to gather a considerable amount of information on the norms which informed the relationship between paramountcy and subordinate groups to set against the impression of the relationship gleaned from the documentary record. There were also a whole range of subsidiary questions with which I was concerned, ranging from ecology to early migrant labour which, while yielding variable reward, were certainly far easier to pursue. Perhaps, however, the most personally rewarding field work experiences which I had were a number of life history interviews that I did with old men in the various areas in which I worked. While these interviews supplied little that was directly relevant to my research, they gave fascinating glimpses of the experience of the Pedi in the twentieth century and the kinds of transformations which occurred within the society. This perhaps is the most potentially fruitful area for oral research in South Africa in the future and one which, if properly employed, could yield rich social history.

INFORMANTS

1. Reverend E.M.E. MOTHUBATSE, born 1.9.1884, Minister in the A.M.E. and from 1921-1958, Tribal Secretary at Mohlaletse. The series of interviews which I conducted with Reverend Mothubatse between 8 November 1976 and 16 November 1976 is the only oral material which I collected which has been cited in this thesis.

2. I also interviewed extensively at Mohlaletse where the then acting (now confirmed) paramount Chief KENNETH K. SEKHUKHUNE and MOSEHLA SEKHUKHUNE, SEHLOPE SEKHUKHUNE, MPYANE SEKHUKHUNE, WILLIAM MAGSHOTO SEKHUKHUNE, JONATHON MOKIRI SEKHUKHUNE, JAMES NGWANATSOMANE HLAKODI, JIM NGWANATSOMANE SEKHUKHUNE, JACKSON KOPYANE MAHLAKGAUME and MOGARAMEDI GODFREY SEKHUKHUNE showed great tolerance of my fumbling questions, received me with great hospitality, and attempted to school me in Maroteng history.

3. A range of other individuals in Sekhukhuneland, Nebo and neighbouring districts also consented to be interviewed. These included the late CHIEF SEKWATI MAMPURU, CHIEF TSEKE MABOOE MASEMOLA, CHIEF PHETEDI T. SEKHUKHUNE, CHIEF LEKOKO MAMPANE, ABEL MOSEHLE, SERAKI SEKHUKHUNE, MARTA MASCHUPJE, RACHEL MOHLALA, PHILIMON MOLEKE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography has been divided into:

1. UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

a. Official

Public Records Office (London)

Transvaal Archives (Pretoria)

Natal Archives (Pietermaritzburg)

Cape Archives (Cape Town)

b. Mission Records and Missionary Diaries

Berlin Missionary Society Archive (East Berlin)

Berlin Missionary Society Transvaal Records (Pretoria)

Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives (Grahamstown)

Missionary Diaries (University of South Africa Archives)

c. Unpublished Private Papers

2. PUBLISHED SOURCES

British Parliamentary Papers

Transvaal Archival Records

Newspapers and Periodicals

Documentary Material subsequently published

Select Books

Select Articles

3. UNPUBLISHED THESES AND PAPERS

UNPUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

Official

Public Records Office

C.O. 291, Transvaal correspondence, original, 1877-1881.

C.O. 879, 10-17, Confidential prints African (south)

Carnarvon Papers, 30/6, correspondence

T.A. Transvaal Archives (Pretoria)

E.V.R. Archives of the First Volksraad 1867-1882, minutes, incoming and outgoing correspondence, commission reports and evidence, petitions.

U.R., Archives of the Uitvoerende Raad (executive council) 1857-1877, minutes, diaries.

K.G. Archives of Kommandant-generaal, 1881-1895, correspondence, reports

S.N. Archives of Superintendent van Naturelle Sake (Superintendent of Native Affairs) 1877-1900, correspondence, commissions, reports.

S.N.A., Secretary of Native Affairs, 1900-1910, correspondence, reports

S.S. Archives of the State Secretary, 1851-1899, incoming, outgoing, and supplementary correspondence, commission evidence and reports, letter books, registers and indexes. (There are over 8,000 volumes in this collection).

L.M., Archives of Landdros of Middelburg, 1873-1890, incoming and outgoing correspondence, letter books

L.L., Archives of the Landdros of Lydenburg (in which are included those of Landdros of Ohrigstad), 1845-1900: incoming and outgoing correspondence, letter books, diaries, court records, land records, inspection registers, contract books and court records, register of owners of farms

L. Archives of the Republiek Lydenburg, 1856-1860. Minutes, Decisions, Laws, incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Volksraad and Uitvoerende Raad; official letters, commissions and government notices. Diaries of Government Secretary and Landdros. Treaties, conventions, agreements, unions and concessions. Financial records, Court records.

N.A. Natal Archives

G.H., Government House (Records of the Governor of Natal).
Letters received from the Z.A.R. 1875-1876 (vols. 854-855)
Letters received from the Special Commissioner Transvaal, 1877-1878 (vols. 789, 790).

C.A. Cape Archives

G.H. Government House. Despatches received from the Administrator, Transvaal, 1877-1881 (vols. 1173-1176).

G.L.W., Griqualand-West (Records of the Lieutenant Governor) correspondence 1873-1875 (vol 17, 184).

Unpublished Non-Official Sources:

Mission Records and Missionary Diaries

Berlin Missionary Society Archives (East Berlin)

B.M.A., Abt 1, Fach 3/8, H. Grützner

B.M.A., Abt 1, Fach 3/10, A. Merensky

B.M.A., Abt 2, Fach 3/1, A. Nachtigal

B.M.A., Abt 2, Fach 3/2, C. Endemann

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/1, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Gerlachshoop, 1860-1866

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/2, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Khalatlolu, 1861-1866*

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/3, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Ga Ratau, 1864-1866*

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/4, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Phatamatsane, 1863-1866, 1877-1879*

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/6, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Botsabelo, 1865-1879

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach, 4/8, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Lydenburg, 1866-1881*

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/13, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Arkona, 1877-1883 *

B.M.A., Abt 3, Fach 4/14, Tagebuch, Correspondenz, Lobethal, 1882.*

* In the process of being transcribed by the University of South Africa Archive.

Berlin Missionary Society Transvaal Records, Transvaal Archives, Pretoria

T.A., A.419, the scattered material relating to the period of this study is mainly located in volumes 1-20. The collection has not yet been sorted and organized. It was previously housed at Botsabelo.

Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Rhodes University, Grahamstown

These contain valuable material for the 1880s and 1890s but little of relevance to this period.

Missionary Diaries. University of South Africa Archives

U.A., Tagebuch A. Nachtigal, 3 volumes, 1859-1897 (5 vol, typed transcript in University of South Africa Library)

U.A., Tagebuch, O. Posselt, 1 volume, 1877-1884

U.A. Tagebuch, C. Kadach, 1 volume, 1877-1903

Unpublished Private Papers

F.A. Armstrong collection (in possession of Dr. T. Armstrong, Durban)

J.A. Erasmus collection (T.A., W.202)

S.P. Englebrecht collection (T.A., A.371) (includes important papers relating to President Burgers)

D. Forbes collection (T.A., A.6062)

R.T.A. James papers (University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province Library, A.55)

P.J. Joubert collection (T.A., A.14)

T. Shepstone papers CC. J. Uys (University of South Africa Library)

Shepstone collection (T & H.C.) (N.A., A.96)

J.C. Winterbach collection (T.A., A.196)

PUBLISHED SOURCES

Parliamentary Papers

C.4141, Correspondence relating to the alleged kidnapping and enslaving of Young Africans by the people of the Transvaal Republic (1869)

C.1748, Correspondence respecting the war between the Transvaal Republic and the Neighbouring Native Tribes and generally with reference to Native Affairs in South Africa to 1877

C.1776, Further correspondence re above

C.1883, Further correspondence respecting the Affairs of South Africa

C.1961, Further correspondence re above

C.2000, Further correspondence re above

C.2079, Further correspondence re above

C.2100, Further correspondence re above

C.2144, Further correspondence re above

C.2220, Further correspondence re above

C.2222, Further correspondence re above

C.2242, Further correspondence re above

C.2252, Further correspondence re above

C.2260, Further correspondence re above

C.2308, Further correspondence re above

C.2316, Further correspondence re above

C.2318, Further correspondence re above

C.2367, Further correspondence re above

C.2374, Further correspondence re above

C.2454, Further correspondence re above

C.2482, Further correspondence re above

C,2505, Further correspondence re above

C.2584, Further correspondence re above

Transvaal Archival Records

F. Jeppe and J.G. Kotze, De Locale Wetten der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, 1849-1885 (Pretoria, 1887).

H.S. Pretorius and D.W. Kruger, Voortrekker Argiefstukke (Pretoria, 1937)

South African Archival Records, Transvaal No. 1-7
Minutes of the Volksraad of the South African Republic with annexures 1844-1868, ed. by J.H. Breytenbach, H.S. Pretorius and D.C. Joubert (Cape Town, 1949-1966).

Newspapers and Periodicals

Berliner Missions-berichte 1859-1890

Gold Fields Mercury (surviving copies) 1875-1878

Transvaal Argus and Potchefstroom Commercial Gazette 1875-1877,

Volkstem, 1873-1882

Documentary material subsequently published

G.S. Preller (ed.), Dagboek van Louis Trichardt (Bloemfontein, 1917)

A. Preston (ed.), The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley (Cape Town, 1973)

Select Books

Agar-Hamilton, J.A.I.
1928 The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers, 1836-1858 (Cape Town)

-
1937 The Road to the North, South Africa, 1852-1856 (London)

Arbousset T., and F. Daumas
1846 Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North-East of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope (Cape Town)

Arndt, E.H.D.
1928 Banking and Currency Development in South Africa (1652-1927) (Cape Town)

Aylward, A.
1878 The Transvaal of Today (London)

Baines, T.
1877 The Gold Regions of South Eastern Africa (N,P.)

Bloch, M. (ed.)
1975 Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology (London)

Bothma, C.V.
1962 Ntshabeleng Social Structure - A Study of a Northern Transvaal Sotho Tribe (Pretoria)

Breutz, P.L.
1953 The Tribes of the Rustenberg and Pilansberg Districts (Pretoria)

Brookes, E.H.
1924 The History of Native Policy in South Africa from 1830 to the Present Day (Cape Town)

Bryant, A.T.
1929 Olden Times in Zululand and Natal (London)

-
1964 A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes (Cape Town)

Burke, E. (ed.)
1969 Journals of Karl Mauch, 1869-1872 (Salisbury)

Cachet, F. Lion
1882 De Worstelstrijd der Transvaalers (Amsterdam)

Cohen, A.
1974 Two Dimensional Man (London)

Cohen, S.
1972 Folk Devils and Moral Panics, the Creation of the Mods and Rockers (London)

Davenport, T.R.H.
1977 South Africa, A Modern History (London)

de Kiewiet, C.W.,
1929 British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics, 1848-1872 (London)

-
1937 The Imperial Factor in South Africa (Cambridge)

-
1941 A History of South Africa, Social and Economic (Oxford)

Dicke, B.H.
1937 The Bush Speaks (Pietermaritzburg)

Duggan-Cronin, A.M.
1931 The Bantu Tribes of South Africa, 11, 2, The Sotho-Chuana Tribes, Sub-Group 11, The Bapedi (Cambridge)

Du Plessis, J.A.
1911 A History of Christian Missions in South Africa (London)

Eiselen, W.
1929 Stamskole in Suid-Afrika (Pretoria)

Ellenburger, D.F.,
1912 History of the Basuto (London)

Engelbrecht, S.P.
1946 Thomas Francois Burgers: A Biography (Pretoria)

Etherington, N.
1978 Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880 (London)

Fortes, M. and E.E. Evans-Pritchard
1940 African Political Systems (London)

Fourie, H.C.M.
1921 Amandabele van Fene Mahlangu (Zwolle)

Franz, G.H.
1936 Makinta Tales (Pietermaritzburg)

Genischen, M.
1902 Bilder von unserem Missionfelde in Süd-und Deutsch-Ost-Afrika (Berlin)

Gluckman, M. and F. Eggan (eds.)
1965 Political Systems and the Distributions of Power, A.S.A. Monograph, 2.

Glynn, H.T.
n.d. Game and Gold; Memories of over fifty years in the Lydenburg district (London)

Gray, R. and D. Birmingham,
1970 Pre-Colonial African Trade (London)

Gray, R. (ed.)
1975 The Cambridge History of Africa, 4, 1600-1790 (Cambridge)

Guy, J.
1979 The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom (London)

Haggard, R.
1882 Cetywayo and His White Neighbours (London)

Hall, S., et al.
1978 Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State and Law and Order (London)

Harries, C.L.
1909 Notes on Sepedi Laws and Customs (Pretoria)

-
1929 The Laws and Customs of the Bapedi and Cognate Tribes of the Transvaal (Johannesburg)

Heckford, S.
1882 A Lady Trader in the Transvaal (London)

Huet, P.
1868 Het Lot der Zwarten in Transvaal (Amsterdam)

Isaacs, N.
1935/6 Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, 1836, L. Hermann (ed.) 2 vols. (Cape Town)

Jeppe, C.
1906 The Kaleidoscopic Transvaal, (Cape Town)

Junod, H.A.
1927 The Life of a South African Tribe, 2 vols. (London)

Kopytoff, I. and S. Miers (eds.)
1977 Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives (Madison, Wisconsin)

Kratzenstein, D.E.
1878 Kurze Geschichte der Berliner Mission (Berlin)

Krige, E.J. and J.O.,
1943 The Realm of the Rain Queen (London)

Kuper, A.
1970 Kalahari Village Politics (Cambridge)

Leclair, E. and H. Schneider (eds.)
1968 Economic Anthropology (New York)

Lewis, I.M.
1968 History and Social Anthropology, A.S.A. Monograph 7 (London)

Leyds, W.J.
1906 The First Annexation of the Transvaal (London)

Livingstone, D.
1857 Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa (London)

Marks, S.
1970 Reluctant Rebellion, the 1906-1908 Disturbances in Natal (Oxford)

Massie,
1905 The Native Tribes of the Transvaal (London)

Mauch, K.
1971 Karl Mauch: African Explorer, F.O. Bernard (ed.) (Cape Town)

Merensky, A.
1875 Beiträge zur Kentniss Süd-Afrikas (Berlin)

-
1886 Wie Erzieht man am besten den Neger zur Plantagen-Arbeit (Berlin)

-
1899 Erinnerungen aus dem Missionsleben in Transvaal 1859-1882 (Berlin) (2nd ed.)

Mönnig, H.
1967 The Pedi (Pretoria)

Nixon, J.
1885 The Complete Story of the Transvaal (London)

Omer-Cooper, J.D.
1966 The Zulu Aftermath (London)

Orpen, J.M.
1946 Reminiscences of Life in South Africa from 1846 to the Present Day (Cape Town)

Palmer, R. and N. Parsons (eds.)
1977 The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and South Africa (London)

Parkin, D.S.
1972 Palms Wines and Witnesses (London)

Preller, G.S.
1920/38 Voortrekkermense, 6 vols. (Cape Town)

Preston, A. (ed.)
1973 The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley (Cape Town)

Ramaila, E.M.
1938 Setlogo Sa Batau (Pretoria)

Ranger, T.O. and I.N. Kimambo (eds.)
1972 The Historical Study of African Religion (London)

Ranger, T.O. and J. Weller (eds.)
1975 Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa (Berkeley and Los Angeles)

Rasmussen, R.K.
1978 Migrant Kingdom. Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa (London)

Rex, J.
1961 Key Problems of Sociological Theory (London)

Roberts, A.
1973 A History of the Bemba (London)

Ross, R.
1976 Adam Kok's Griquas. A Study in the Development of Stratification in South Africa (Cambridge)

Sandeman, E.F.
1880 Eight Months in an Ox Wagon (London)

Sanders, P.
1975 Moshoeshoe, Chief of the Sotho (London)

Schapera, I.
1942 A Short History of the Bategatla-bagaKgafela of Bechuanaland Protectorate (Cape Town)

–
1934 Western Civilization and the Natives of South Africa: Studies in Culture Contact (London)

–
1937 The Bantu Speaking Tribes of South Africa, An Ethnological Survey (London)

–
1946 Government and Politics in Tribal Societies (London)

–
1947 Migrant Labour and Tribal Life (London)

Schwellnus, P.E.
n.d. Tsa Magosi le Dilete (Pretoria)

Seddon, D. (ed.)
1978 Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology (London)

Stayt, H.A.
1931 The Bavenda (London)

Stuart, J.
1854 De Hollandsche Afrikanen en hunne Republieken in Zuid-Afrika (Amsterdam)

Terray, E.
1972 Marxism and "Primitive Societies" (London and New York)

Thompson, L.M. (ed.)
1969 African Societies in Southern Africa (London)

1975 Survival in Two Worlds: Moshoeshoe of Lesotho 1786-1870 (Oxford)

Transvaal Native Affairs Department,
1905 Short History of the Tribes of the Transvaal (Pretoria)

Uys, C.J.
1933 In the Era of Shepstone (Lovedale)

Van der Horst, S.T.
1942 Native Labour in South Africa (Oxford)

Vansina, J.
1965 Oral Traditions (London)

Van Warmelo, N.J.
1930 Transvaal Ndebele Texts (Pretoria)

1931 A Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa (Pretoria)

1944 The Ba Letswalo or Banarene (Pretoria)

1944 The Bathlabine of Moxoboya (Pretoria)

1944 The Bakoni baMaake (Pretoria)

1944 The Banarene of Sekororo (Pretoria)

1944 The Banarene of Mmutlana (Pretoria)

1944 The Bakoni of Mametsa (Pretoria)

1944 The Batubatse of Masisimale (Pretoria)

1944 The Genealogy of the House of Sekhukhune (Pretoria)

1953 Die Tlokwa en Birwa van Noord Transvaal (Pretoria)

Walker, E.A.
1928 A History of South Africa (London)

-
1936 The Great Trek (London)

Wangemann, T.
1876 Lebensbilder aus Südafrika (Berlin)

-
1877 Die Berliner Mission im Bassuto-Lande (Berlin)

-
1868 Ein Reise-Jahr in Sud-Afrika (Berlin)

-
1868 Maleo und Sekukuni (Berlin)

-
1886 Ein Zweites Reisejahr in Süd-Afrika (Berlin)

Welsh, D.
1971 The Roots of Segregation (Cape Town)

Wilson, M. and L. Thompson (eds.)
1969/71 The Oxford History of South Africa, 2 vols. (Oxford)

Wright, M.
1971 German Missions in Tanganyika, 1891-1941 (Oxford)

Ziervogel, D.
1954 The Eastern Sotho (Pretoria)

Select Articles

Atmore, A. and P. Sanders
'Sotho arms and ammunition in the nineteenth century', Journal of African History, 13, 4(1972)

Atmore, A. and S. Marks,
'The Imperial Factor in South Africa: Towards a Reassessment' Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 111, 1(1974)

Beinart, W.
'Economic change in Pondoland in the nineteenth century', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 7 (1975)

'Joyini Inkomo: Cattle Advances and the Origins of Migrancy from Pondoland', Journal of Southern African Studies 5, 2 (1979)

Bonner, P.
'The Relations between internal and external Politics in Swaziland and the Eastern Transvaal in the mid-nineteenth century', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 2 (1970)

Bothma, C.V.
'The political structure of the Pedi of Sekhukhuneland', African Studies, 35, 3-4 (1976)

Bundy, C.
'The emergence and decline of a South African peasantry', African Affairs, n.1 (1972)

Cohen, A.
'Political Anthropology; the analysis of the symbolism of power relations', Man, 4 (1969)

Comarof, J.
'Chiefship in a South African homeland', Journal of Southern African Studies, 1, 1(1974),

Cooper, F.
'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies', Journal of African History, 20 (1979)

Cornwell, R.
'Land and Politics in the Transvaal in the 1880s', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 4 (1972)

Delius, P.
'Migrant Labour and the Pedi before 1869', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar, 7, (1975)

De Vaal, J.B.
'Die Rol van João Albasini in die Geskiedenis van die Transvaal' Archives Year Book for South African History XVI, 1 (1953)

Dicke, B.H.
'The tsetse-fly's influence on South African history', South African Journal of Science XXIX (1932)

-
'The Northern Transvaal Voortrekkers', Archives Year Book for South African History, IV, 1 (1941)

Eiselen, W.
'Die Eintlike Reëndiens van die Bapedi', South African Journal of Science XXV (1928)

-
'Preferential Marriage', Africa, 1, 4 (1928)

-
'The Sacred Fire of the Bapedi of the Transvaal', South African Journal of Science XXVI (1929)

-
'Uber die Häuptlingswürde bei den Bapedi', Africa, V, 3 (1932)

-
'The art of divination as practiced by the Bamasemola', Bantu Studies, VI, 1, 3 (1932)

-
'Die Posisie van die Weduwee by die Heidense en die Kristelike Batau', Bantu Studies, IX (1935)

Endemann, K.
'Mittheilungen über die Sotho Neger', Zeitschrift fur Ethnographie VI (1874)

Erskine, St. V.
'Journey to Umzila's, South-East Africa', Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, XLV (1875)

Etherington, N.A.
'Labour Supply and the Genesis of South African Confederation in the 1870s', Journal of African History, 20, 2 (1979)

Franz, G.H.
'Some Customs of the Transvaal Basotho', Bantu Studies, V, 3 (1931)

Gray, R.
'Annular Eclipse Maps', Journal of African History, 9, 1 (1968)

Grimsehl, H.
'Onluste in Modjadjiland 1890-1894', Archives Year Book for South African History, XVIII, 2 (1955)

Grützner, H.
'Uber die Gebrauche der Basotho', Zeitschrift fur Ethnographie IX (1877)

Haddon, A.C.
'Copper Rod Currency from the Transvaal', Man, VIII, 65 (1908)

Harries, P.
'Labour Migration from the Delagoa Bay Hinterland to South Africa, 1852-1895', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 7 (1975)

Hoernle, A.W.
'A note on bored stones among the Bantu', Bantu Studies, V, 3 (1931)

Horton, R.
'African Conversion', Africa, XLI, 2 (1971)

Hunt, D.R.
'An Account of the Bapedi', Bantu Studies, V, 4 (1931)

Kirk, T.
'Progress and decline in the Kat River settlement, 1829-1854' Journal of African History, 14, 3 (1973)

Kistner, W.
'The Anti-slavery Agitations against the Transvaal Republic 1852-1868', Archives Year Book for South African History, XV, 11 (1952)

Krige, E.J.
'Agricultural Ceremonies and Practices of the Balobedu', Bantu Studies, V, 3 (1931)

—
'The Social Significance of Beer among the Balobedu', Bantu Studies, VI (1932)

—
'Note on the Phalaborwa and their Morula complex', Bantu Studies 11 (1937)

Krige, J.D.
'Traditional origins and tribal relationships of the Sotho of the Northern Transvaal', Bantu Studies, XI, 4 (1937)

Kruger, D.W.
'Die weg na die see of die ooskus in Boerebeleid voor 1877' Archives Year Book for South African History, 1, 1 (1938)

Kruger, F.
'Tlokwa Traditions', Bantu Studies, 11 (1937)

Kuper, A.
'The Social Structure of the Sotho-speaking peoples of Southern Africa', Africa, 45, 1, 2 (1975)

—
'Culture Area or Political System', Africa, 46, 3 (1976)

Law, R.
'In search of a Marxist perspective on pre-Colonial tropical Africa', Journal of African History, 19, 3 (1978)

Legassick, M.
'The Frontier Traditions in South African Historiography', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 2 (1970)

Lombaard, B.V.
'Bydraes tot Bronne oor Johannes Dinkwanyane', Historia, X, 1 (1965)

Longmore, L.
'Death and Burial Customs of the Bapedi of Sekukuniland', African Studies, XI, 2 (1952)

Lye, W.F.
'The Ndebele Kingdom south of the Limpopo River', Journal of African History 10, 1 (1969)

Merensky, A.
'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bapeli', B.M.B. 1862.

-
'Waffen, Zauberwürfel und Schmuckkoralen der Südafrikaner' Zeitschrift fur Ethnographie XIV (1882)

Mönnig, H.O.
'The Structure of Lobedu Social and Political Organization', African Studies, XXII, 2 (1963)

-
'The Baroka Ba Nkwana', African Studies, XXII, 4 (1963)

Mouton, J.A.
'Generaal Piet Joubert in die Transvaalse Geskiedenis', Archives Year Book for South African History, 1 (1957)

Otto, J.C.
'Die Regsgronde vir die grondbesit deur die Boere in Noord-Oostelike Transvaal', Historiese Studies, 1, 4 (1940)

-
'Sekoekoeni en die handel in vuurwapens', Historiese Studies, 5, 3 (1944)

-
'Die Voorgeskiedenis en opkoms van die Bapedi-stam', Historiese Studies 6, 2, (1945)

-
'Oorsake en Gebeurtenisse wat Indirek en Regstreeks Aanleiding gegee het tot die Veldtog teen Sekoekoene', Historiese Studies, 7, 4 (1946)

Paver, F.R.
'Trade and mining in the pre-European Transvaal', South African Journal of Science XXX (1933)

Pitje, G.M.
'Traditional Systems of Male Education among Pedi and Cognate Tribes', African Studies, IX, 2, 3,4 (1950)

Potgieter, F.J.
'Die Vestiging van die Blanke in Transvaal (1837-1886) met speciale Verwysing na die Verhoudinge tussen die Mens en die Omgewing', Archives Year Book for South African History, XXI, 11 (1958)

Raddatz, H.
'Das Kaffernland des Untern Oliphant', Petermanns Mitteilungen XXXII, 2 (1886)

Ranger, T.O.
'Growing from the Roots, Reflections on Peasant Research in Central and Southern Africa', Journal of Southern African Studies 5, 1 (1978)

-
'European Attitudes and African Realities; the Rise and Fall of the Matola Chiefs of south-east Tanzania', Journal of African History, 20, 1 (1979)

Rey, P.P.
'The lineage mode of productions', Critique of Anthropology, 3 (1975)

Roberts, N. and C.A.T. Winter,
'The Kgoma, or inititation rites of the Bapedi of Sekukuniland' South African Journal of Science, XII (1915)

Schwellnus, C.M.
'Short Notes on the Phalabora Smelting Ovens', South African Journal of Science, XXXIII (1936)

Smith, K.W.
'The campaigns against the Bapedi of Sekhukhune, 1877-1879', Archives Year Book for South African History, XXX, 11 (1967)

-
'The Fall of the Bapedi of the North-eastern Transvaal', Journal of African History, 10, 2 (1969)

Tayal, M.J.
'Indian indentured labour in Natal 1890-1911, Indian Economic and Social History Review, XIV, 4 (1978)

Terray, E.
'Technology, Tradition and the State', Critique of Anthropology, 3 (1975)

Trapido, S.
'The South African Republic: Class Formation and the State, 1850-1900', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 3 (1971)

Trapido, S.
'Aspects in the Transitions from Slavery to Serfdom: The South African Republic, 1842-1902', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar 6 (1974)

—
'Landlord and Tenant in a Colonial Economy: The Transvaal 1880-1910, Journal of Southern African Studies 5, 1 (1978)

Van Coller, H.P.
'Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapeditroon', Historiese Studies III, 3, 4 (1942)

Van der Merwe, A.P.
'Die Naturelle en die Maatskappy te Ohrigstad en Lydenburg (1845-1877)', Historiese Studies, 2, 12, (1941)

Van der Merwe, D.W.,
'Johannes Dinkwanyane, 1842-1876', South African Historical Journal, 8, Nov. (1976).

Van Jaarsveld, F.A.
'Die Veldkornet en sy aandeel in die opbou van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek', Archives Year Book for South African History, XII, 1 (1950)

Van Rooyen, T.S.
'Die Verhoudinge tussen die Boer, Engelse en Naturelle in die Geskiedenis van die Oos-Transvaal tot 1882', Archives Year Book for South African History, XIV, 1 (1951)

—
'Die Sendeling Alexander Merensky in die Geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1859-1882', Archives Year Book for South African History, XVII, 2 (1954)

Wagner, R.
'Zoutpansberg: some notes on the dynamics of a hunting frontier', I.C.S. S.A. Seminar, 6 (1974)

Wangemann, T.
Maleo en Sekoekoeni, 1868 G.P.J. Trumpelmann (ed.) (Cape Town, 1951)

Webster, D.
'From peasant to proletarian; the development/underdevelopment debate in South Africa', Africa Perspective 13 (1979)

Wichmann, F.A.F.
'Die Wordingsgeskiedenis van die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (1838-1860)', Archives Year Book for South African History IV, 11 (1941)

Winter, J.A.
'The Traditions of Ra'lolo', South African Journal of Science IX (1912)

—
'Hymns in praise of famous chiefs', South African Journal of Science IX (1912)

—
'The History of Sekwati', South African Journal of Science, IX (1912)

—
'The Phallus Cult amongst the Bantu; Particularly the Bapedi of Eastern Transvaal', South African Journal of Science, X (1913)

—
'Native Medicines', South African Journal of Science, XI (1914)

—
'The Mental and Moral Capabilities of the Natives, especially of Sekukuniland, Eastern Transvaal', South African Journal of Science, XI (1914)

Unpublished Theses and Papers

Appelgryn, M.S.
'Die Presidentskap van T.F. Burgers, 1872-1877', unpub. D.Litt. thesis, University of South African (1977)

Bonner, P.
'The Rise, Consolidation and Disintegration of Dhlamini Power in Swaziland between 1820-1899', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1977)

'Early State Formation Among the Nguni: The Relevance of the Swazi Case', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, London University, Jan., 1978.

Beinart, W.
'Production, Labour Migrancy and the Chieftaincy: Aspects of the Political Economy of Pondoland, 1860-1930', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1979)

Beinart, W. and P. Delius,
'"The Family" and Early Migrancy in Southern Africa', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, University of London, May 1979

Bundy, C.
'African peasants and economic changes in South Africa, 1870-1913, with particular reference to the Cape', unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, (1976).

Cobbing, J.R.
'The Ndebele under the Khumalos 1820-1896', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Lancaster, (1976).

Comaroff, J.
'Competition for office and political process among the Baralong Boo Ratshidi of the South African, Botswana Borderland', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London (1974)

Cooper, C.
'Land and Labour in the Transvaal', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of London (1974)

Delius, P.
'Report on research on the nineteenth century history of the Pedi', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, London University, May 1977.

'Conflict and change in Pedi society', unpub. seminar paper, African History Seminar, University of London, May 1975

Duvenage, G.D.J.
'Die Republiek Lydenburg in Suid-Afrika-Agtergrond, Ontstaan en Einde', unpub. D. Litt. thesis, University of South Africa (1966)

Gilliomee, H.
'The South African Frontier: stages in development', unpub. seminar paper, Q.E.H., Oxford University, 1978

Guy, J.J.
'The destruction of a pre-capitalist economy and the origin of labour supplies: the Zulu case', unpub. seminar paper, Conference on Southern African Labour History, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976.

Harries, P.
'Kinship, ideology and the origins of migrant labour', unpub. seminar paper, C.I.A.S., University of London, January 1980.

Hedges, D.
'Trade and politics in southern Mozambique and Zululand in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, (1978).

Huyser, J.D.
'Die Naturelle Politiek van die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek', unpub. D.Litt. thesis, University of Pretoria (1945)

Keegan, T.
'Black peril, lapsed whites: a study of ideological crisis in early twentieth century South Africa', unpub. seminar paper, C.I.A.S., University of London, Jan., 1980.

Krüger, B.J.
'Diskussies en Wetgewing rondom die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek 1885-1899', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of South Africa (1965)

Monteith, M.A.
'Cetshwayo and Sekhukhune, 1875-1879', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, (1978)

Naude, P.
'Die Geskiedenis van Zoutpansberg 1836-1837', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of South Africa (1939)

'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1858-1899', 2 vols, unpub. D.Litt thesis, University of South Africa (1954)

Otto, J.C.
'Die Sekoekoeni-Oorlog Tydens die Regering van President Burgers', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, (1934)

Parsons, G.N.
'Khama III, the Bamangwato, and the British, with special reference to 1895-1923', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, (1973).

Relly, G.H.
'The transformation of rural relationships in the western Transvaal', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of London, (1978)

Sansom, B.
'Leadership and authority in a Pedi chiefdom', unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, (1970)

Siebörger, R.
'The recruitment and organisation of African labour for the Kimberley diamond mines, 1871-1888', unpub. M.A. thesis, Rhodes University (1975)

Van der Merwe, A.P.
'Die Voorgeskiedenis van die Republiek Lydenburg', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria (1941)

Van der Merwe, D.W.
'Die Geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal 1860-1900', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria (1975)

Wynne, K.F.
'The discovery, administration and development of the gold fields in the eastern Transvaal up to 1886', unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, (1935)